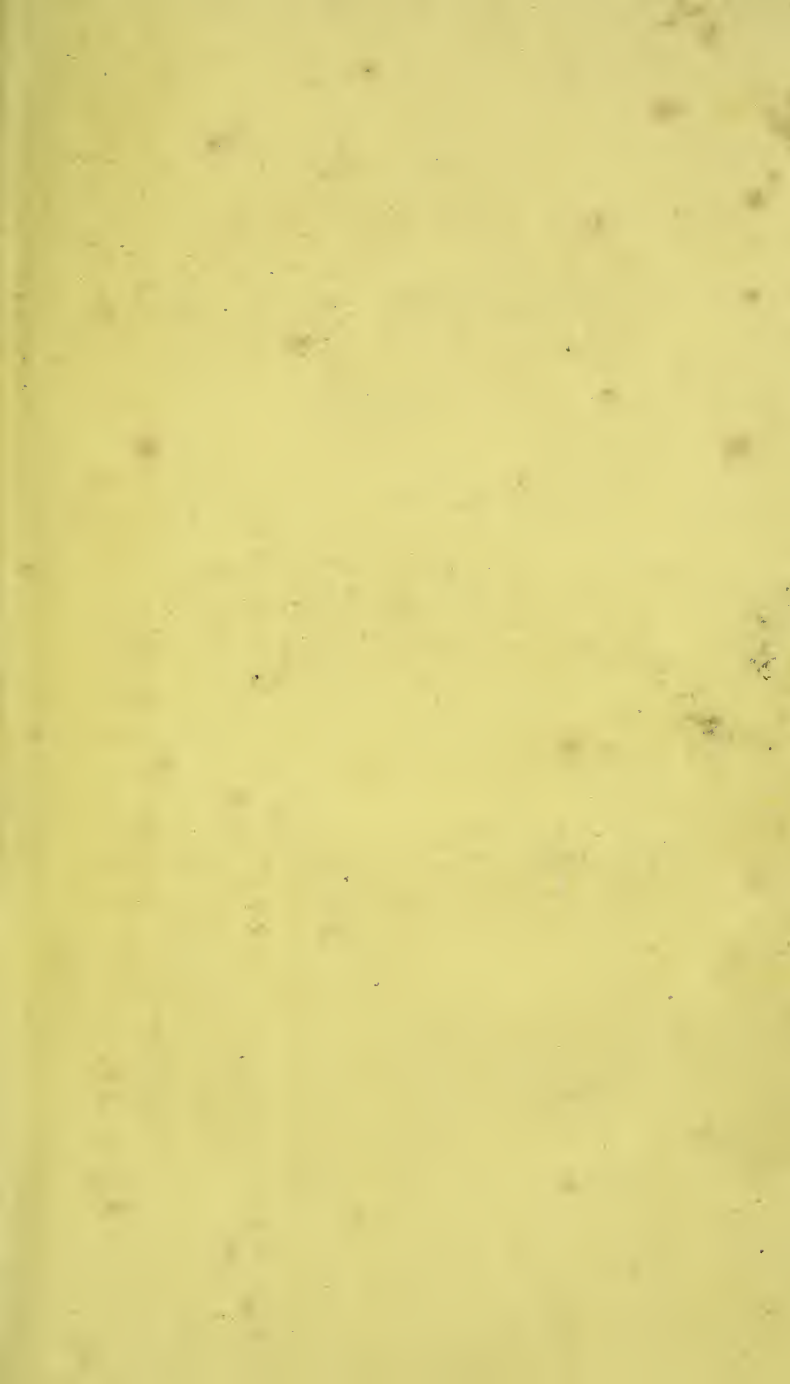


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THE
LADY OF THE BEDCHAMBER.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. A. CRAWFORD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

“Compell’d to wed, because she was my ward,
Her soul was absent when she gave her hand.”

DRYDEN.

E. Mockler

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THE
LADY OF THE BEDCHAMBER.

CHAPTER I.

A hundred knights, with Palamon there came,
Approv'd in sight, and men of mighty name ;
Their arms were sev'ral, as their nations were,
But furnish'd all alike with sword and spear.
Some wore coat-armour imitating scale,
And next their skins were stubborn shirts of mail ;
Some wore a breast plate and a light jupon,
THEIR HORSES CLOTH'D WITH RICH CAPARISON.

* * * * *

This on his helmet wore a lady's glove,
And that a sleeve embroider'd by his love.

Palamon and Arcite.—DRYDEN.

SEVERAL circumstances occurred at this period
to awaken a secret uneasiness in the mind of
Isabelle. She could not help observing that

the attentions of De Cressy had become more marked, more *empressé* since the appearance of De Montfort in Paris. As a friend, she had often found the services of De Cressy invaluable. She liked him too, for his agreeable manners, and apparent amiability of disposition, and deeply regretted the discovery she feared she had made of his sentiments towards her, both on her own account and on his—— On her own, because she should be necessitated to keep at a distance a man for whom she felt a sincere regard—and for his sake, because it pained her to think that he should involve himself in all the unhappiness of a hopeless passion.

This conjecture arose more from an intuitive perception that there was something different, though hardly to be defined, in De Cressy's manner towards her of late, than from any word or look to which she could make the slightest exception. Perhaps she was too clear sighted—perhaps it was only the carelessness

of De Montfort, that thus enhanced and drew forth the attentions of the friend. She thought it might be so, but nevertheless, she took herself severely to task with respect to the nature of her own sentiments towards De Cressy, and soon discovered, that even were she free to choose, he was not the man who could ever have made a serious impression upon her heart, and perhaps it was this latent consciousness that had made her so long blind to the danger of so great an intimacy with him.

The man, who could have now touched the not easily awakened chord of Isabelle's love, whatever might have been her feelings at the romantic age of fifteen, must have had an energy and depth of character, which the gay, good-tempered De Cressy did not possess—he must be one to whom she could look up with pride, and feel that others looked up to likewise. In reality, genius and talent were the idols of Isabelle, and she would much sooner have fallen in love with Corneille, now

about sixty-four years of age, than with the handsome De Cressy, at eight-and-twenty. But love had been so long excluded from all her calculations of happiness, that she almost felt it wrong thus to analyze the sentiments of her heart—but this done, she was satisfied on the score of its freedom.

Isabelle endeavoured, too, to flatter herself, that the continual presence of De Montfort could have no influence on her actions—he was as indifferent to her as she was to him—it was impossible that a thought of him could actuate her in the slightest degree. Yet, in spite of herself, the presence of De Montfort did influence Isabelle, in a way she was not aware of, and perhaps, if it had not done so, she would have appeared to greater advantage in his eyes; at least, she would have spared him some of the jealous pangs, which often pierced his bosom when he appeared to be perfectly unmindful of her. But this feeling which she experienced — this wish, so natural in her

position, to shew that her indifference was equal to what she considered to be his—made her always endeavour to exhibit a gaiety and flow of spirits in company, which, while they enhanced her beauty and wit in the eyes of a world that had often before complained of the coldness and disregard with which its incense had been received, began to disturb the impression which her artlessness of manner had at first made on De Montfort ; and led him to consider, if it was indeed natural, or only a more refined species of coquetry. Nevertheless, he could not fix upon any one as an object, whose attentions Isabelle seemed particularly desirous to obtain. From the Duke de Coaslin, he perceived that she always drew back with unaffected dislike ; and although he suspected that De Cressy liked her, there was nothing in her unconstrained manner towards him as yet, that could decidedly point his suspicions to him.

Isabelle herself, notwithstanding her apparent gaiety, was in reality neither so happy nor so

light hearted, as she had been before the arrival of De Montfort at Paris. In spite of her most strenuous endeavours towards the possession of a perfect unconcern about him, and the impatience with which she strove against a thought of her ever attracting his love, with all that self deception which we often practice on ourselves, in deprecating that, for which in the depths of our heart, we have a secret and hidden desire, the slightest mark of attention or observation from De Montfort, awoke a flutter in her bosom which she vainly attempted to still, while frightened at this tumult which a softer expression of his eye as he bowed to her, or a half sigh and a look of absorbed interest which she once detected in him, when she sung, occasioned, her pride would immediately take the alarm, and feigning to be occupied with any thing and every one but him, she would ward off every softening feeling towards him, that dared to insinuate itself into her heart.

Thus, though each was constantly occupied

with thoughts of the other, not the slightest advancement was made in any interchange of words or sentiments between them, beyond the coldest courtesy, since they had first met.

The early part of the year had seen the arrival of De Montfort in Paris. It was now the beginning of May, and preparations were being made for a grand entertainment at the palace of Versailles, whither all the court adjourned on the fifth of the month.

The lovely glades and bowers of Versailles did not tend to increase the composure of Isabelle.

The scene that occurred there, shortly before her marriage, rose vividly to her mind's eye. She saw again the haughty air of De Montfort, when he was introduced to her by the king.—Again those words rung in her ear—"I would prefer banishment from court—aye, death itself, to this hated union,"—then, she heard De Cressy's deprecating answer, and De Montfort's contemptuous reply.

Thus she mused, seated upon a bench in one of the shady alleys, which she had sought soon after her arrival there. But little time was allowed her for those meditations. In an hour an animated scene was to be enacted in another part of the gardens, and Isabelle was sought for by her companions and hurried away to join the queen.

And now, when the cool breezes of evening swept through the gardens, all hastened to the borders of a lake, in the midst of which, on an island, appeared the far famed palace of the fairy Alcina. Many good knights and true, the king being amongst them, were supposed to be under the power of her enchantments—ready to do her service—the willing victims of her art, being spell-bound and fascinated by the pleasures with which she had surrounded them ; and here at this hour, were to pass in review before her, those whom she had selected to do her honour in the tournament which was about to take place.

It was a spot that well assimilated with Ariosto's beautiful description—

Vaghi boschetti di soavi allori,
Di palme e di amenissemme mortelle
Cedri, ed aranci ch'avean frutti, e fiori
Contesti in varie forme, e tutte belle,
Facean repari ai fervidi calori
De' giorni estivi con lor spesse ombrelle ;
E tra quei rami con sicuri voli
Contando se ne giano i rosignuoli.

All the court being assembled, there entered into the lists at six o'clock in the evening, a herald at arms, in a habit *couleur de feu*, with embroideries in silver, after an antique fashion, and mounted on a noble charger—then appeared Monsieur d'Artagnan, the king's page, richly dressed in his majesty's livery of flame colour, and bearing the king's lance and shield, on which shone a sun, formed of precious stones, with these words, *nec cesso nec erro*, inscribed in letters of gold.

The pages of the Dukes de Saint Aignan, and de Noailles, the first *Marechal de Camp*,

and the other *Juge de Courses*, followed, accoutred in the livery, and bearing the devices of their lords. Trumpeters and tymbaliers rode after the pages, attired in flame colour and silver, their plumes of the same hue, and their horses caparisoned with embroidered housings to match, while golden suns glittered on their tymbals and the bannerols of their trumpets.

Then came the Duke de St. Aignan, representing the intractable Guido—armed as an ancient Greek warrior. He wore a cuirass of silver tissue, covered with golden scales; his helmet was ornamented with a dragon, over which hung a profusion of white plumes mixed with scarlet and black, and his snow white charger was similarly caparisoned.

Banderolles were again seen flying, and the martial music of trumpets, tymbals and various other instruments, ushered into the lists the great Louis himself, under the guise of Ruggiero. His majesty was likewise armed as a Greek. His cuirass of plates of silver was covered

with a rich embroidery of gold, studded with diamonds, and plumes of flame colour nodded gracefully over his helmet. All the jewels of the crown glittered upon his dress, or sparkled amidst the gold and silver which adorned the flame coloured trappings of his high mettled steed, who proudly advancing, seemed scarcely to touch the ground.

Vain would be the attempt to describe the splendid accoutrements of the various knights who followed. Suffice it to say, that the flower of the French nobility appeared under the semblance of the noble paladins, subjugated by the arts of the beautiful enchantress, all in suitable costume and equipments, while upon the shield of each one, borne by his squire, were emblazoned in characters of gold, verses descriptive of his assumed title and character.

There were to be found the Dukes de Guise, De Foix, De Coaslin, the Marquises de Villequier, and De Soyecourt, the Prince de Marsillac, and many other distinguished names,

too numerous to mention ; but amongst them all, none were more conspicuous, whether for grace and dexterity in feats of arms, or for bravery of apparel, than were the Marquis de Cressy, and the Baron de Montfort.

The marquis, as Griffon the Fair, was arrayed in cloth of silver, adorned with rubies, the harness and equipage of his white steed being after the same fashion, while De Montfort, in the character of the dark Aquilant, was accoutred in black, embroidered in gold and jet, with plumes, horse and lance, in accordance with his dress.

And now Alcina, more beautiful than all her attendant nymphs,

“ Sè come è bello il sol più d’ogni stella,”

summoned up by her magic spells the various pageants she had prepared, still further to enthrall those captive knights.

Apollo, in honour of whom the Pythian games were used to be celebrated, appeared in his chariot of dazzling light, to animate the knights

by his presence. At his feet were the four ages of gold, silver, brass and iron, distinguished by their appropriate emblems, and old Time, with his scythe and wings, managed the fiery steeds which drew this golden car, round which were assembled the hours, and the celestial signs, arrayed in all the charms with which the poets have depicted them ; and, as those paladins and pageants moved along in fair array, shepherds erected the barriers, to the sound of martial music.

Soon the knights took their places in the lists, and commenced the favourite sport of running at the ring, in which none surpassed the king in skill and address. Bright eyes watched eagerly the progress of those sports, and among the beauties of the court many a heart throbbed with delight as its owner recognised her colours worn by one or other of the knights. Isabelle alone looked on with dismay, for she saw that De Cressy had adop-

ted her colours, thus publicly avowing his devotion to her.

After all the knights had been thus engaged for some time, they were obliged to succumb to three, who, pre-eminent above the others, remained to dispute the prize. They were the Marquis de la Valliere representing *Zerbino*, De Montfort, and De Cressy.

Isabelle looked on intently, and felt an unaccountable joy when De Montfort as victor, received from the hand of the queen mother, the golden sword enriched with diamonds, having baldric and buckles of great value to match, being the prize which he had won.

Night being now come, the magic wand of Alcina conjured up a thousand flambeaux which illuminated this delicious spot. Pan, with the sylvan deities, the fauns and dryads came from their deep retirements to offer the most delicate fruits and the most intoxicating beverages—the goddess Diana hastens with the spoils of the chase to add her offerings to the banquet, and

spring, summer, autumn and winter, brought the treasures of their respective seasons, and amidst flowers and foliage, the music of falling waters and the songs of nightingales, in the perfume of the night air and beneath the starry canopy of the heavens, did the enchantress prepare her seductive feast.

The knights still continuing captives in the enchanted island, Alcina conjured up on the night of the second day new amusements to render them unconscious of the bonds by which they were fettered, and displaying before their eyes the beautiful plains of Greece, fascinated them with the representation of the *Princesse D'Elide*, written by Moliere for the occasion.

Already she began to fear for the stability of her power, and trembling lest so many paladins should grow weary of inactivity, prepared by powerful spells to defend her territory.

When the night of the third day arrived, the spectators perceived that her island,

“Dove il più bel palazzo e’l più giocondo
Vider, che mai fosse veduto al mondo,”

was defended by four huge giants aided by as many mis-shapen looking dwarfs, while on the bosom of the mirror-like lake, Alcina herself with two of her attendant nymphs, each one borne by a marine monster, poured forth such melting cadences of song, as Orpheus and the Sirens of old would have vainly tried to surpass.

Soon however the enchantress felt presentiments of her approaching destruction, and, abandoning the lake, doubled the guards around her palace. Summoning up the powers of darkness to assist her, she raised the tower, so high that they seemed to touch the heavens, and surrounded them with fiends and demons in shapes and forms never seen before.

Six knights, long time imprisoned within the palace, now made a desperate *sortie*, but, overwhelmed by the demons and monsters, were again forced within its walls. The hopes of Alcina begin to revive, when the fairy Melissa appears under the form of Atalanta—

“ Con quella grave, e venerabil faccia,
Che Ruggier sempre reverir solea, ”

and approaches Ruggiero (the King) who with some of the other paladins were wandering at large on the island. Quick as thought Alcina prepares to defeat her purpose, but Melissa has already placed on the finger of this brave paladin, the wonderful ring which has the power of destroying all enchantments—the sorceress no longer appears young and fair—the ‘ *misto color di rose, e di ligustri* ’ was gone

“ Pallido, cresco e macilente avea
Alcina il viso, il crin raro e canuto :
Sua statura a sei palmi non giungea ;
Ogni dente di bocca era caduto ; ”

and now the thunder rolls, the lightning flashes, volumes of fire shoot up to heaven—the superb palace of Alcina with the wicked enchantress are reduced to ashes—the heavens, the earth, the waters seem all to be on fire—globes of fire issue from the lake—falling stars are quenched in its bosom—prodigies and wondrous miracles follow the achievement which the King has

wrought in delivering himself and his companions from their seductive confinement on the island of the enchantress—brilliant illuminations conclude the entertainment, and the pleasures of the enchanted isle are at an end.

CHAPTER II.

“The trumpets sound,
And warlike symphony is heard around,
The marching troops through Athens take their way,
The great earl-martial orders their array.
The fair from high the passing pomp behold,
A rain of flowers is from the window roll’d,
The casements are with golden tissue spread,
And horses’ hoofs, for earth, on silken tapestry tread;
The king goes midmost, and the rivals ride,
In equal rank, and close his either side.”

Palamon and Arcite.—DRYDEN.

THIS beautiful fairy drama, which lasted three days, being finished, jousts and tournaments followed an entertainment never equalled in the annals of any court, for the splendour of its

pageants, and the high rank of the actors who figured in them, as well as for the genius and talent that were united to produce them, the seducing harmony of Lully, the dramatic powers of Molière, the surprising conceptions and magnificent decorations of the machinist Vigarini, and the ingenious art with which Benserade and the President Perigny united the eulogiums of the knights of Ariosto, who appeared on the Enchanted Isle, with those of the real actors in that drama—all combined to form a reality, unequalled by any thing which the most vivid and romantic imagination could pourtray.

Assembled on the fourth day, upon a gilded iron balustrade which surrounded the Palace of Versailles, and which overlooked the fosse where the lists and barriers were raised, each lady eagerly prepared to watch the prowess of her favourite chevalier. The king, accompanied by the same knights whom he had released from 'durance vile,' and with whom he had

enjoyed the diversion of running at the ring, soon appeared within the lists, the Duke de Saint Aginan and the Marechal de Noailles still remaining marshal and judge of the field.

The sport now fixed upon was that of *courre les têtes*, which had lately been introduced from Germany. It shewed off the skill of a knight in the management of his horse in all the *passes de guerre*, and likewise in the exercise of the lance, the spear, and the sword.

Louis entered the lists first, followed by his knights in single file, each one arrayed in the same equipments, and his horse caparisoned, as on the preceding days, with lance in hand, and a dart under the right thigh.

The monarch and the first six knights had various success, some carrying off one or two heads, some three, but no one succeeded in bearing off every head until it came to the turn of the Baron de Montfort, who followed seventh knight in the line after the king.

He had well skilled himself in all the passes

during his visit to Count Herman, and now outshone every rival in the dexterity and grace with which he managed his horse and threw the dart. Carrying the Turk's head with ease, he threw his lance to a page, and making a *demi volte*, put his horse at full speed, and pierced, in passing, the Moor's head with his dart, then taking a javelin, he threw it with an unerring aim at a buckler, on which was represented the head of a Medusa, and finishing his *demi volte*, still riding at full speed, bore away the fourth head on the point of his sword, when every voice unanimously pronounced De Montfort to be the victor.

Several other tilts and jousts ensued, but notwithstanding the skill of many noble knights, De Cressy amongst them, the Baron de Montfort bore away a diamond rose of great price, which Marie Therese bestowed on him with her own fair hand.

Various were the amusements which the king and queen partook of with the lords and ladies

of the court, on each afternoon of the succeeding three days, which concluded the week allotted to this brilliant festival.

On one evening was represented the comedy of the *Facheux* by Molière ; on another, the king conducted the queen and all the ladies of the court into an apartment, where had been prepared by his orders a lottery filled with the choicest works of art, and the most beautiful specimens of jewelry, and entertained himself with observing how *fate* distributed his gifts to the fair expectants.

This day likewise the Duc de St. Aignan as Guido, and the Marquis de Soyecourt as Oliviere, challenged each other to single combat, and appeared in the lists armed from head to foot, the king himself read aloud the order of the tilts and jousts, and, after a close contest, de Soyecourt was pronounced the victor.

Many other trials of skill ensued, and on the following day was another grand tournament between Louis and all his knights, while

the evening concluded with a splendid ball. De Montfort signalized himself on this day as before, and bore off many of the prizes, but as if satisfied with his achievements on the field, he remained an inactive spectator of the ball without mingling in the dance.

Notwithstanding his determination of trying to dispel the coldness that existed between himself and Isabelle, and of endeavouring to win her forgiveness, every effort he made to that effect, seemed to him, only to widen the impassable gulf, and to deepen the abyss that existed between them.

Ever before him—ever near him, since the court had arrived at Versailles, this proximity while it heightened his passion and made him more fully aware of all her brilliant attractions and accomplishments, did but place before his eyes more fully, the obstacles that stood between him and the accomplishment of his wishes, while, as his passion increased self reproach, wounded pride, diffidence and distrust

of his own ability ever to conciliate her, rendered him in her eyes as cold and as indifferent as ever.

“My dear Isabelle,” said the lively Madame de Brancas to her on one of the days of the tournament, “were I in your place, how I would torment that superb De Montfort; I know it is true, that you cannot endure him, but still young and lovely as you are, to have so careless a husband! but you are so prudish, you keep the men at such a distance. Ah! were De Montfort my husband, I would make him afraid of Louis himself, or at least of the Duke de Coaslin.” But Madame de Brancas did not attempt to renew her advice, for Isabelle had heard her with so chilling an air, and had turned away with such haughty displeasure, that she did not dare revert to the theme again.

And now Isabelle moved gracefully, and to all appearance, gaily in the dance with De Cressy.

On entering the ball room, she had secretly wished some one else might be her partner.

Her suspicions of his attachment to her, had become almost a certainty. At this tournament he had singled her out as the object of all his attention and devotion, and she dreaded to hear from his lips a disclosure of a love which even if she were free, she could never return, nevertheless when she saw the Duke de Coaslin, whom she detested, approaching her, with the intent to engage her for the dance, she felt grateful to De Cressy for hastening forward to her relief, and anticipating the duke before he had time to speak, by requesting the honour of her hand, and she received him with her usual sweet smile.

De Montfort was not far off—he had seen with displeasure, the colours that De Cressy had adopted at the tournament, and now a fear that the sentiments which his jealous observation had long since detected, might be reciprocated by Isabelle, pierced him to the heart. Perhaps

had he known what was passing in the mind of Isabelle, and how much he himself occupied her thoughts at the very time she was dancing and talking with De Cressy, he would not have felt this.

Isabelle would have given a great deal to be able to discover what De Montfort was musing about, as he stood thoughtfully leaning against a pillar, apparently absorbed in his own meditations. She had seen him, as she eagerly watched his prowess, from the balcony where she sat beside the Queen, all animation and fire in the lists, during the progress of the tournament. But that sport over, he appeared to have assumed a new character and unmindful of the attractions around him, to wrap himself up in a sombre silence, and a thought flashed across her mind—a wish to know if she was still Isabelle de Valcour, and he as heart whole as he appeared to be now, and if no influence had ever been used in order to direct his attentions towards her, would it have been im-

possible, had she tried to do so, to captivate his proud heart; and though she repelled this idea over and over again, ever as she passed him in the dance it presented itself to her fancy.

The ball was nearly concluded—on the morrow the court were to remove to St. Cloud, but Isabelle was not destined to lay her head on her pillow this night without first experiencing sensations nearly allied to consternation and terror.

De Cressy had led her to a seat, and had turned to address an acquaintance just arrived from Italy.

“Ah! D’Artigny,” said he, “I am glad to see you are come back at last!—I believe you only joined our party this evening. What have you not lost by your absence!—though I dare say we *preux* chevaliers have gained by it, as we should have found you a formidable adversary.”

“It was late last night when I entered Paris,” replied the young nobleman addressed

as D'Artigny, "and I found it impossible to get away from them until this evening. Had I known that this splendid tournament was in contemplation, I would have left Venice a week sooner."

"Ah you have been in Venice then," rejoined De Cressy, "and how is that queen of the ocean?—how have you spent your time there?"

"Agreeably enough," replied D'Artigny, "I had a number of acquaintances, and was engaged at some masked ball or other every evening."

"And you did not weary of her silent canals and funereal looking gondolas," rejoined De Cressy, "or of haunting the square of St. Mark and searching for some fair incognita—some beautiful nun, who flitted across your path, and then vanished for ever?"

"No indeed," said D'Artigny laughing, "such adventure has never befallen me, and I like the motion of the gliding gondolas and the songs of

the gondoliers amazingly—but you seem to know Venice well, De Cressy—when have you been there?”

“Yes, I know Venice well,” replied De Cressy, and the startled Isabelle fancied that his voice assumed a softer tone, “but it is some time since I saw it—six or seven years at least—I was there during one of the carnivals, and at first every thing was new and delightful; but that period over, I soon became weary of Venice for many reasons—yet an event occurred during my abode there, that will ever be vivid in my memory—it is a romantic story;” and here he paused—then lowering his voice, he continued in a subdued and rather hurried tone, of which however the breathlessly attentive Isabelle did not lose a word “I was at a ball at the Palazzo de—when a beautiful girl Agnes Loredan—no Loredan was not her name—it was her aunt who was the Marchioness Loredan—I could never find out the real name of this fascinating Agnes—but no matter what her name was—I

was looking over the balcony, when, after descending the steps, as she was about to enter into a gondola, her foot slipped—she was precipitated into the lagune, and I—” Here a voice was heard to say “De Cressy the King wants you to make up a party at bassette”—and the Marquis de Soyecourt, who had been dispatched by the King for that purpose, hastily cut short the conversation, and carried De Cressy off, leaving Isabelle almost stupified with amazement.

“Fell into the lagune as she was descending into the gondola, and I,” Isabelle almost mechanically repeated to herself—“Good Heavens! can it be so?—yes, he would have added but for this interruption—‘and I threw myself in after her.’”

Isabelle felt so ill that she was obliged to plead a violent head-ache, and to retire immediately from the ball-room.

Dismissing her attendant, she paced her

apartment for several minutes in great agitation.

“And I have been wearing this token of De Cressy’s love,” exclaimed she, taking the locket we have mentioned before from her bosom, where it always hung, throwing it on the table and bursting into a passion of tears.

This gift, formerly so prized and treasured, became at once detestable to her, and she hastily opened her jewel case, with the intention of putting it away, but a sudden thought seemed to arrest her hand, she paused, sat down and with a sigh began to examine it attentively, as if in the vain hope of finding something in it to contradict the irrefragible evidence of her own senses. She looked at its delicate Venetian workmanship over and over again; then opening the locket by a spring, contemplated the device which it enclosed.

It represented a small female hand, grasped by the gauntleted one of a knight, with this inscription—

“Non sia mai sciolto.”

Isabelle trembled as she read it, a presentiment took possession of her soul that she was bound to De Cressy by a tie, which no efforts could unloose. Then for the hundred thousandth time she examined the other side of the locket, which from its depth might well have enclosed a picture or other device, and recollected how bitter had been her disappointment on first examining it to find that it contained no miniature of the donor.

“Would it had,” ejaculated she, “then I should have known and dreaded an intimate acquaintance with De Cressy from the first.”

And then, with a sentiment of superstitious awe, Isabelle’s thoughts reverted to the flowers she had received from the gipsy woman on the banks of the Seine, and to the mysterious dreams that had tormented her on the night succeeding that brief interview, and again, as she had heard her in her dreams, the tones of the gipsy’s voice reverberated in her ear with the prophecy ‘memory and undying love will

yet take possession of thy heart—yes, when least expected thou shalt see him again.’

“I love him not—I can never love him,” exclaimed Isabelle passionately, as the first part of this visionary prediction occurred to her: “but alas! has not the latter part of it been indeed fulfilled—I have seen him again when least expected?”

All the night Isabelle was a prey to conflicting emotions, in which, however, grief and terror were predominant. This discovery made her feel as if she was on the edge of a precipice, from which no power of her own could save her, as if impelled and drawn on step by step, notwithstanding all her exertions and struggles to retreat, a plunge into the abyss beneath became inevitable.

One strong arm might have been stretched forth to deliver her, but he drew back, he came not near her, and Isabelle covered her face with her hands and wept, as she could not but con-

fess to herself, how dear, how prized would be his guardian care.

As some poor mariner, whom the close of evening saw embarked on a calm blue sea, misled during the night by some false beacon, finds when morning breaks, that his frail bark is drifting fast over the bright, still waters, towards a whirlpool that must engulf him, with no breath of air to fill his sail, no friendly arm to assist him in rowing, hopeless of escape, abandons himself to his fate,—so did Isabelle, trembling and aghast, look upon the prospect before her.

Nevertheless, after the first tumults were over, Isabelle became more calm. This revelation of what De Cressy and herself had once been to each other, was in her own keeping, and none should ever know it—De Cressy, she was satisfied, had not the most remote idea of it, and could never discover it.

Perhaps had this elucidation of who had been the real object of her youthful imagina-

tive and dream-like love—of this first and indeed only romance of her heart, consecrated by gratitude for the chivalrous manner in which the hero of it had rescued her from the lagune, of this memory so often wrestled with, so firmly crushed since her marriage, and yet by its sometimes flashing across her mind and mingling with her dreams, making her sensible that all her efforts were unable entirely to obliterate it—had this elucidation we repeat, of her mysterious lover occurred a few months sooner, it might have had a different effect upon Isabelle, and given a dangerous softness to her feelings towards the really handsome De Cressy.

But it now only served to unveil to her the engrossing passion which had of late taken possession of her heart, and which had perhaps rooted itself there the more firmly, because it had sprung up unmarked — had to struggle with her wounded pride, and had to conceal

itself beneath the self-deception she was practising on herself.

Until now, she had fancied it was but a natural curiosity that had led her to listen with such attention to the reports every where spread of De Montfort's success in public life — that had made her endeavour to find out what others thought of his mental and personal endowments, that had induced her to watch the grace with which he rode, and his feats of skill at the tilting and the jousts.

Until now she had believed it was only to show him that she cared not for him, that since their arrival at Versailles she had studied with the nicest art, all the little coqueties of dress, choosing and rejecting a robe a hundred times before she put it on, adorning with her own hands the glossy braids and ringlets of her hair, which Victorine was always used to arrange before to her perfect satisfaction, and spending a time that she would formerly have considered as thrown away, in deciding on

what colour best suited her complexion. It was not because he was present that she overcame her usual reluctance to display her musical talents, and that the tones of her voice assumed a redoubled sweetness and expression, which entranced her admiring listeners.

Love had so disguised himself that Isabelle dreamed not until now, that to pique De Montfort, by exciting the attention of others -- to attract his eye, to rouse him from the indifference in which he appeared plunged, had been for the last week the moving spring of all her words, thoughts and actions.

All this De Montfort had watched with a jealous eye, and unjustly attributed to levity and coldness of heart, and while each day Isabelle obtained more power over his peace of mind, each day seemed but to add a new barrier to the mountain of ice that divided them.

Yet even while he blamed, he excused her. He accused himself of cruelty, of insanity in following as he had done, the dictates of his

mad passion for Clementine, and leaving so young a creature, and so artless as she appeared to be by nature entirely to her own will and guidance.

It is true she was his wife—he might have claimed the privilege of carrying her off into his château of Normandy, or to the other end of the world, far from the pursuit of De Cressy, of whom he began to be madly jealous. But the idea no sooner crossed his imagination, than he impetuously spurned it away, as inimical alike to the delicacy of his love, and to any chance he might ever have, of obtaining the affections of Isabelle; and again he reverted to his former plan of trying to soften her heart by a thousand fond attentions — a plan which, spell-bound as he felt himself in her presence, he had never yet dared to put into practice.

Thus several days were spent by De Montfort, after the return of the court to Paris in thoughts, resolves and purposes, wavering and

fluctuating as the billows of the ocean, when the storm sweeps over them. At last he suddenly determined to request Isabelle, whom he knew he should meet that evening at a ball given by the Duchess of ———, to permit him to see her alone for a few minutes on the morrow.

“ I will then frankly avow my sentiments for her,” soliloquized he ; “ and I will at least hear from her own lips what are her feelings towards me.”

But when the evening came, and he saw the flattering attentions of the king to Isabelle, and noted the watchful devotion of De Cressy, who, unrepelled by her marked change of manner towards him, did but redouble his assiduities, the proud De Montfort had not courage to approach her, and left the salon without even being perceived by Isabelle, although her eyes had often wandered anxiously around in search of him.

CHAPTER III.

A turban girds her brow, white as the sea-foam,
Whence all untrammelled, her dark thin hair
Streams fitfully upon her storm-bent front :
Her eye at rest, pale fire in its black orb
Innocuous sleeps—but, rous'd, Jove's thunder cloud
Enkindles not so fiercely.

DUKE OF MANTUA.

ISABELLE was very unhappy.—She had at last discovered that she loved De Montfort—loved, by a strange and wayward fate, the man to whom destiny had united her, yet from whom, for that very reason, she seemed but the further separated.

She saw less of De Montfort too, since her return from Versailles. He, putting a false construction upon several little circumstances, had made up his mind upon the score of her attachment to De Cressy, and notwithstanding his late resolve of coming to an explanation with her, after a violent conflict with himself, determined to abandon all idea of so vain an attempt, and endeavouring to absorb his painful reflections by abstruse study, retired all at once from the haunts where he was used to meet her.

Isabelle would willingly have fled from the sight of De Cressy, but the position she held as *Dame du Palais*, obliged her to enter into society, and brought them constantly together.

Neither was there any thing in De Cressy's earnest and insinuating but respectful manners, to which she could openly object, particularly as his lips had never dared to mention, whatever his looks and actions might do, the hopes

which, with a secret and triumphant anticipation of ultimate success, he entertained.

In fact, the discovery which Isabelle had made of the hidden bond between them--of his identity with the stranger youth of Venice, had deprived her of her native ease and sprightly ingenuousness when she conversed with him, and gave an unwonted diffidence to her manners, which he attributed to a far different cause to that from whence it sprung.

Thus deserted by De Montfort, hemmed in on every side by De Cressy, and with fears, in accordance with the superstition of the time in which she lived, of being destined to a fate that she could not avert, Isabelle felt like some poor bird, which rendered motionless by the eye of the fascinator that is fixed upon it, drooping and trembling, is unable to use its wings and fly away.

At the period of which we write, astrology, sorcery and demonology, were believed in by all ranks of society. The wisest and most

learned men had their nativities cast, and many were the arts resorted to for diving into the future, and drawing aside the veil from things to come.

Isabelle was not untinged with those superstitions, and finding the equipoise of her mind completely overthrown, and her thoughts continually reverting to the words that had fallen from the lips of De Cressy on the night of the ball at Versailles, relating to his former abode at Venice, and feeling that his society now always filled her with a nameless dread, lest her destiny might in some way be linked with his, although every succeeding day rendered his attentions more painful to her, she determined to seek a celebrated fortune teller, supposed to be of Egyptian birth, who for many months past had resided in the outskirts of Paris, and try if her skill might not remove those dim and undefined presages of evil, which haunted her waking thoughts and nightly dreams.

Although it was well known that statesmen and warriors, as well as many dames of the court had secretly consulted this woman, still it was always done in mystery and disguise, none ever choosing to own their acquaintance with her, and if the truth was told, many returning from her house with heavier hearts than when they entered it.

It was whispered, that to some she had revealed fearful family secrets, that but for her, would have slept in oblivion. She disclosed to the statesman the jealousies and plots with which he was surrounded, and which he could in no way circumvent. If she shewed the warrior the laurels he was to win in battle, she likewise shewed him the speedy death that was to follow his success. All those who dared to look upon her magic mirror, did but reap sorrow for their temerity. In that fatal class the young maiden saw her beloved kneeling at the feet of another, or if he proved true, friends and parents sepa-

rated them for ever, and even if a goodly picture of futurity was seen on its bosom, there was always shewn with it some misfortune or cankering care that marred its brightness.

Isabelle was aware of those reports, but, she had a question to ask—a mystery to unravel, and she was determined to run any risk to obtain a solution of it.

It was on an evening, that a grand masquerade ball was given at the palace, that Isabelle masqued and dressed in the habit of a nun of the order of St. Ursula, an hour before the time of assembling at the masquerade, repaired alone and on foot to that part of the city where the house inhabited by the Egyptian was situated.

With a palpitating heart and unsteady hand, Isabelle knocked at the gate of an old fashioned deserted looking house, in the *rue de* ——— a street which had once been inhabited by several noble families, but which, of late years, from an idea that many of the houses were haunted,

had been in a great measure abandoned to a few mechanics.

After waiting for some seconds, a heavy iron bar seemed to be drawn back from the ponderous gate, and Isabelle was admitted into the grass grown court, by a frightful looking dwarf, who motioning her to follow him into the house, passed on rapidly through a long narrow and dimly lighted passage, which to Isabelle appeared to be interminable. At last they reached a flight of stone steps, where Isabelle, startled and terrified by the gloom of the place, paused and felt irresolute, whether she should not hastily retrace her steps and give up her purposed visit ; but she had now gone too far to recede, and the dwarf seeing her irresolution, addressed to her some words of encouragement in softer accents than one could have supposed to proceed from so hideous a monster, although in a tongue entirely unknown to her. Summoning up all her courage upon hearing his voice, Isabelle followed him up several flights

of steps. A short passage now conducted them to a large folding door, which being noiselessly opened by the dwarf, Isabelle found herself admitted into a spacious apartment, partially lighted by the lingering rays of departing day, which finding their way through two large windows, overlooking what had once been a beautiful terraced garden, at one end of it, shed a sort of softened and indistinct twilight around, leaving the extremity of the room in total obscurity.

Fragments of faded and moth-eaten tapestry hung upon the walls, the rich carved work on the ceiling was discoloured, and the remains of the fret work and gilding with which the apartment had once been adorned, now only served to give it a more desolate appearance. Facing the door by which Isabelle had entered, was to be seen a door of similar dimensions, and at the end opposite the windows, hung a crimson curtain, now entirely concealed by the gloom.

There was no furniture of any kind, but in the centre of the dark oaken floor was spread a rich Turkey carpet, in the midst of which, on a pile of cushions, reclined a female, magnificently dressed in the Eastern costume. On the entrance of Isabelle, she arose and saluted her, inviting her, in good French, but with a peculiar accent, to place herself beside her on the cushions.

Isabelle, with a startled consciousness that she had heard the voice before, obeyed—then raising her eyes to those of her companion, beheld her piercing black orbs fixed upon her with a look of keen inquiry, and immediately recognised with much perturbation, the commanding air and features of the gipsy from whom she had received the mystic flowers on the banks of the Seine in Normandy.

“Isabelle de Montfort, lay aside thy mask, all disguise is useless with me—thou art come at last, I have long expected thee—what wouldst thou with me? wouldst thou try my

knowledge of the future or of the past? speak!" Thus said the sybil; and Isabelle, with trembling hands, untied her mask, and laying it on the cushion, took from her finger a ruby ring of great value, which she presented to her.

"Shew me the past first," replied Isabelle in a low voice; "and then I shall be satisfied of the truth of the future."

"Thou shalt be satisfied," rejoined the sybil, "wait here for a few moments until I summon thee."

So saying, the sybil disappeared behind the crimson curtain. Her absence was however short, a small portion of the drapery was raised by an invisible hand, and Isabelle beheld her standing beside a huge mirror, in front of which, on a black marble pedestal, a lamp was burning. No ray of light, except that of the lamp, penetrated into this recess.

Throwing various herbs on a chafing dish of coals which stood beside the lamp, and repeat-

ing some words in an inaudible voice, the gipsy desired Isabelle to approach.

“What wouldst thou now see?” said she, as Isabelle stood before the mirror.

“I would recal the past,” replied Isabelle, “shew me him whom my young heart first loved, and then——”

“Attend,” interrupted the sorceress, “thou shalt tell me thy next wish afterwards—mark what appears before thee.”

And now Isabelle saw the surface of the mirror, which at first reflected nothing but the objects around, become cloudy and dim, as gathering shadows passed over it.

Soon a faint silvery moonlight stole through, what appeared to be, the tracery of a gothic window, and growing brighter as she intently gazed upon it, slowly unveiled part of the interior of a lofty cathedral church, glancing through its long aisles, and throwing a scattered beam here and there, upon its grey pillars and sculptured tombs.

In the foreground a young cavalier knelt at the feet of a slight female figure, who was enveloped in a hood and veil—his attitude was that of entreaty, and he seemed to press her hand passionately to his lips—he wore a Spanish cloak and plumed cap, but his face was in deep shadow, although the moonlight clearly revealed his figure.

“It is sufficient,” said Isabelle, averting her face from the well remembered scene, “you have brought before me the past, I would now behold the future. Give me but a glimpse of him, who is to be the lord of my future destiny, and with whom, at my birth, the stars have interwoven the thread of my existence. Is it you cavalier, whose image is now represented in the mirror, or another? speak—bring him before me, I conjure you.”

“Look again,” said the sybil, as the shadow slowly disappeared from the surface of the mirror.

Agitated, and with so entire an absorption of

every thought and faculty in the visual sense, that several people might have entered the room without her being aware of it, Isabelle fixed her eyes again upon the mirror, and was quite unconscious that at this moment the dwarf noiselessly opened the door and admitted a third person into the apartment.

On seeing the dwarf's ugly face protruding through the door-way, the sybil had made him a hasty sign that he was not to permit any one to enter, but it was too late—the intruder already stood in the apartment. Like Isabelle, he appeared to be on his way to the masquerade, as he was masked and habited in a Spanish dress.

With an angry gesture, the gipsy motioned the unwelcome visitor to withdraw through the opposite door to which she pointed.

He immediately obeyed, and Isabelle beheld with consternation, as he quickly crossed the room, the figure of a Spanish cavalier reflected in the mirror, not indistinct and shadowy, like

the images she had just gazed upon, but so defined, so animated, so apparently palpable to her senses, that she started back with a suppressed shriek, and looked behind her—no one however, met her view, the apartment was empty, the gipsy alone stood beside her.

Isabelle covered her face with her hands, and sunk into a chair—she listened not to the gipsy's exhortations and indeed commands, once more to study the magic mirror. Her fears of the power which the star of De Cressy had obtained over her's were now confirmed, and her whole thoughts were turned to consider in what manner she had best struggle against its malignant influence.

The gipsy took her hand, and would have drawn her again to the mirror, but snatching it away, with an impetuosity foreign to her natural gentleness, Isabelle darted from the apartment — rapidly descended the numerous flights of stone steps — hurried through the passage, and finding the dwarf in attendance

at the door, put a piece of gold into his hand. This he received with a grin of delight, and Isabelle, emerging from the desolate court, the gate of which he again barred behind her, with a timid step and throbbing heart, and many a furtive glance thrown around, passed through the deserted quarter, rendered still more lonely by the deepening twilight, and after a walk which seemed to have trebled its distance since she had trod it before, at length reached the palace and entered unobserved by a private door. And now, although much agitated and overcome by the events of the evening, Isabelle, having been ordered by the queen to join her, in her masquerade dress, at a certain hour which was nearly arrived, had not a moment's time to give to reflection, but was obliged immediately to hasten to the royal apartments.

The morning of the same day in which Isabelle had made her visit to the sorceress, De Montfort, in looking over some papers in a

cabinet, came across the letter which the old gipsy of the Carpathian mountains had requested him to be the bearer of to his daughter, whom he then surmised to be a sojourner in Paris. On his first arrival in Paris, De Montfort had made many fruitless attempts to discover if any horde of foreign gipsies had arrived there lately, or were hovering about the vicinity, but as all inquiries proved vain, he had at last thrown aside the old man's letter in despair. He had, however, on the preceding day, heard, for the first time, of this celebrated fortune-teller, of her extraordinary skill in the black art, and in casting nativities, and of her having predicted the ruin of one of the ministers who had lately fallen under the displeasure of the king, and as the letter of the old gipsy caught his eye, it suddenly occurred to him, that this person might be no other than Zanina herself.

Wishing to satisfy his suspicions without loss of time, and having, although with much

reluctance, promised to accompany to the masquerade, his father, the Count de Beaumont, to whom his son's sudden seclusion from society occasioned a great deal of pain, militating as it did against all the hopes and castle building he had been indulging in, De Montfort determined that no hour could be more suitable for his projected visit, than the one preceding the assembling of the motley crew he had promised to join. He therefore, when the twilight began to render every object indistinct, proceeded in his masquerade dress, which happened, by chance, to be that of a Spanish knight, to seek for the house which had been minutely described to him.

Knocking loudly at the gate, the dwarf soon made his appearance, and was on the point of saying that his mistress was engaged, when the baron, thinking that a sudden surprise might elicit from the creature, a solution of his doubts, and perceiving his unwillingness to admit him within the gate, said in an authori-

tative tone of voice, and in the Transylvanian dialect, that being the bearer of a missive from the old gipsy, who dwelt with his horde in the solitudes of the Carpathian mountains, to his daughter, he insisted upon an immediate interview with her.

The dwarf, who himself belonged to this tribe of gipsies, uttered a yell of delight, thus discovering to De Montfort that he was right in his conjectures, and forgetting the orders of his mistress, never to disturb her secret communings with a stranger, ushered De Montfort through the long passage and up the stone stair-case, unadvisedly admitting him into the presence of the sorceress, as we have seen before.

With a glance of his eye, De Montfort recognized the figure of Zanina herself, who, emerging from behind the curtain with an eager gesture and scowling brow, pointed to the opposite door. De Montfort catching a glimpse of the mirror, before which he per-

ceived standing the statue-like form of a female, immediately obeyed, and, following the direction of Zanina's finger, passed through the other door into a spacious apartment, still more desolate than the one we have described, as part of it was open to the night winds of heaven, and a raven who sat croaking on a ruined pilaster, at the further end, seemed to have made his nest amidst the broken rafters.

He was startled by the faint shriek of a female voice—then he heard the hurried step across the floor, and soon the door opened, and Zanina, with no benign aspect, bade him enter. A few words served to explain the purport of his visit, and after Zanina had taken the scroll, pressed it to her lips, and glanced her eye over it, her countenance changed—she burst into tears—kissed the hem of De Montfort's cloak, and passionately exclaimed: "Thou hast saved my boy!"

"I was but too happy," replied De Montfort,

“to be able to requite in some degree, the hospitality of you and your good father to the benighted stranger — but I have come at an inopportune time ; it was only this morning it occurred to me to seek you here.”

“It was my fault,” said Zanina ; “I thought not of the reflection of thy figure in the mirror, when I motioned thee to cross the room, and it so distracted the lady, that my efforts were useless to calm her—but speak—tell me, did any one know of the character thou wert to appear in this night at the masquerade ?”

“No one, certainly,” replied De Montfort ; “my choice was purely accidental, and I only decided on it myself five minutes before I put it on.”

“’Tis well,” said the sorceress thoughtfully ; “I cannot fathom her distress,”—she paused for a few seconds and then added : “But most powerful and beneficent lord, what can I do for thee ?—how thank thee sufficiently ?—shall

I exert my art in thy favour and read thee thy destiny ?”

“My destiny is read and told,” said De Montfort, mournfully; “besides Zanina,” added he, “to confess the truth, I like not thy unhallowed art, and I do not believe in it.”

“Thou dost not believe in it !” exclaimed Zanina, haughtily.

“No,” replied De Montfort, firmly; “I do not believe in it.”

“Shall I give thee a sign ?” demanded Zanina, earnestly.

“Torment me not with this child’s play,” said De Montfort, sternly; “I must depart, I came but to give thee thy letter—farewell.”

“Farewell, we shall meet to-morrow evening at the theatre, at all events,” replied Zanina.

“Now thou art out,” exclaimed De Montfort, contemptuously; “for I have already signified my determination of not going thither to-morrow evening.”

“Thou art mistaken—thou wilt be there,”

said Zanina, mildly ; “but again farewell—I thank thee from the bottom of my heart, for saving my beautiful boy—the light and treasure of my eyes.”

CHAPTER IV.

What equal torment to the grief of mind,
And pining anguish hid in gentle heart,
That inly feeds itself with thoughts unkind,
And nourisheth her own consuming smart !
What medicine can any leech's art
Yield such a sore that doth her grievance hide,
And will to none her malady impart !

SPENSER'S *Fairy Queen*.

It was near morning when De Montfort left the masquerade and returned to his hotel. He had been unusually depressed during the whole night. Perhaps some of our readers may have experienced the dispiriting effects which a brilliant assembly has sometimes on the mind. In general we seek there to animate—to exhilarate—to revive the animal spirits, but such

is not always the result of mingling in the giddy crowd—to persons of deep feeling, chafing it may be from some keen disappointment, or who have, after severe struggles, obtained some equanimity of mind, the noise and glitter of a crowded assembly oppresses with a sense of solitariness more complete, than the same time spent in the wildest glen, furthest from the haunts of men, could bestow. Perhaps it is the discord between the gay scene around and our feelings, that brings with it this intolerable weight of loneliness and depression, when the rustling of a single leaf, the murmuring of the tiniest stream, the veriest insignificant chirping of a grasshopper, would have cheered and refreshed the drooping soul.

Such were the feelings of De Montfort during the masquerade, yet once there, although hating the bustle and merriment, he staid on, and was amongst the last to leave it; for although of late he had shunned every place of resort where there was a chance of meeting with Isabelle,

yet such is the waywardness and instability of human resolves, that he continued to move incessantly from one group of masquers to another, endeavouring to discover with what party, or in what disguise she could be found, heedless alike of the comic scenes that were passing on every side, and of the lively sallies, gay interrogatories, and bright eyes of many of the fair masquers.

But Isabelle was no where to be seen. In a frame of mind very similar to that of De Montfort, she had found herself so unfitted for the scene, that remaining in the rooms scarcely half an hour, she had slipped away unperceived and retired to her pillow, to think but not to sleep, so that De Montfort had hardly time to reach the masquerade, before Isabelle had quitted it.

On the following evening was to be performed the beautiful entertainment of *Psyche* at the Palais Royal. It was known that Corneille had lent his aid to Moliere, in the composition of this piece, and had himself written all the

principal scenes. The reason for these two great worshippers of Thalia and Melpomene thus uniting their talents, was, that the king had signified to Moliere his wish for an entertainment, combining all that could enchant and interest the soul in poetry, with those magnificent exhibitions and decorations, which captivating the ear and eye, had a wonderful charm for the monarch; and the comic dramatist, taking the idea of his plot from Fontaine's celebrated romance of *Psyche*, which had just appeared, and fearing to trust to his own skill in a composition differing so entirely from any one of his former works, had had recourse to the friendly aid of the great Corneille, who, though now in the decline of life, could paint with the brilliant imagination and fire of youth, the master passion of the soul, and move an admiring audience to pity and to tears.

This association of the genius of those two celebrated writers, supported as it was, by the skill of the most ingenious machinists, which

had been put into requisition in order to represent all that was lovely in earth and sky, and grandest and most appalling in the descent into hell, made the representation of Psyche to be eagerly anticipated by the lovers of the theatre.

De Montfort, however, had made up his mind not to go to the theatre on this evening, feeling a disinclination to every thing that wore the aspect of gaiety, or that could affect the passions or touch the heart, purposing to see the representation of Psyche some other time, when he should be in a more congenial mood.

He had, therefore, lent his box to a friend, who at this time, had a large party staying with him, for whom he was very desirous to get accommodation at the theatre. De Montfort was not then, agreeably surprised, when an invitation from the king was sent to him, half an hour before the time appointed for the performance, to fill the place of one of the lords in attendance, who had been suddenly taken ill, and an invitation from Louis being synonymous

to a command, he was obliged to prepare immediately to obey. This he did the more unwillingly as Zanina's prediction of meeting him at the theatre occurred to him, and this strange coincidence, notwithstanding he deemed it the sport of accident, disturbed him not a little.

Isabelle, in the mean time, although she had taken no interest in the masquerade, and had flown from it as soon as she could, had so long looked forward with pleasure to the acting of *Psyche*, and having already been present at a rehearsal of some of the principal scenes, determined to make use of her own box this evening without joining any party, and expected, by going early, to be entirely to herself. According to her intentions she was almost among the first who entered the theatre, and taking her seat in the back part of the box, half concealed by a curtain, so as to be able to see clearly the actors and actresses, without being under the eye of general observation, hoped, by the absorbing influence of this beautiful drama,

to be able to fly, as it were, from her own thoughts and reflections.

Hidden as she was, even De Montfort did not perceive Isabelle until the commencement of the fourth act, when forgetful of everything but the performance in which she was entirely wrapt, and bending forward in the attitude of profound attention, she slightly discomposed the drapery of the curtain. De Montfort's eyes were immediately rivetted on her—they had long ceased to wander from one group of the court beauties to another in a vain search for her, and it was only by an accidental change in his position, that he now, to his great surprise, discovered she was in her own box and was quite alone.

To some eyes she would have appeared less lovely than usual, as the expression of her countenance was grave almost to melancholy, and her cheek had not a tint of colour, but De Montfort fancied he had never seen her look so beautiful before.

Yet the new character in which she appeared to him—so different in the isolation, and melancholy with which she had surrounded herself, to her accustomed brilliant appearance in the crowded circles where he was used to meet her—while it enhanced her charms in his sight, brought with it food for the keenest jealousy, by suggesting the idea that the absence of the favoured De Cressy might be the cause of it.

Isabelle had not apparently been discovered except by himself, by any of the party De Montfort was with, and from the corner where he now stood, he was able, unobserved, to watch every change and turn of her expressive countenance, while she, more and more absorbed as the interest heightened, never once took her eyes off the theatre.

There was something in the mystery attached to this passionate and unknown lover—in the doubts and fears awakened in the bosom of the too confiding Psyche by her malicious sisters—in the melancholy she cannot conceal from her

lover, and in the tender reproaches which induces him to swear by Styx to do every thing in his power to dissipate it and to fulfil her wishes, that made every chord in the heart of Isabelle vibrate over and over again.

Ah ! she too loved as passionately as Psyche—but no discovery could either deprive her of, or bestow on her, the heart of the man she loved.

Wayward as was the fate of Psyche—was not her fate even more wayward ? It was because *Love* himself had taken possession of her, and awakened all the secret sensibilities so long shut up, that Isabelle's tears fell so fast when *L'Amour*, unable to break his oath, satisfies the fatal curiosity of Psyche in that beautiful passage which begins :

“ Hé bien, je suis le Dieu le plus puissant des Dieux ;
Absolu sur la terre, absolu dans les cieux ;
Dans les eaux, dans les airs, mon pouvoir est suprême
En un mot, je suis l'Amour même,
Qui de mes propres traits m'étois blessé pour vous,
Et sans la violence, hélas ! que vous me faites,
Et qui vient de changer mon amour en courroux,
Vous m'alliez avoir pour époux,” &c. &c.

He then flies away for ever, while the splendid palace, gardens, bowers and fountains, disappear, and the unfortunate Psyche finds herself alone in a desolate wilderness.

The distress deepens—the next scene is beautiful; Psyche laments her fatal error, and reproaches her ungrateful heart—

“ Cœur ingrat, tu n’avois qu’un feu mal allumé,
Et l’on ne peut vouloir, du moment que l’on aime,
Que ce que veut l’objet aimé.”

Then she addresses the river god, and asks him to bury her in his waves—

“ Fleuve, de qui les eaux baignent ces tristes sables,
Ensevelis mon crime dans tes flots ;
Et pour finir des maux si déplorables,
Laisse-moi, dans ton lit, assurer mon repos.”

But the river god refuses to receive her—

“ Ton trépas souilleroit mes oudes,
Psyche, le ciel te le defend.”

Another scene intervened between Venus and the unhappy Psyche, without Isabelle’s relaxing in her profound attention ; and then hell itself was opened to the view, with the infernal palace

of Pluto, surrounded by an ocean of fire into the midst of which the miserable Psyche is going to plunge in search of her lover, while the Furies and other grim spectres in vain attempt to dispute her passage.

At this moment, a cry of fire ! fire ! was simultaneously heard on every side, and in an instant the whole theatre became a scene of the most appalling confusion. A general rush was made for the door—the crowd pressed upon each other, benches were overthrown—partitions of the seats demolished, and it was with the greatest difficulty the police could keep any order, or prevent numbers from being trampled to death.

The king and queen, with those of the court who were immediately in their train, obtained a safe and speedy exit through a private door kept clear for them by a large body of police. This door, Isabelle, who had frequently passed through it with the queen, likewise endeavoured to reach, but she had scarcely escaped from her

box before she was violently jostled aside, and would have been precipitated into the pit, had she not, fainting and breathless, saved herself from falling, by clinging to one of the pillars which divided the boxes—but she felt that she could not long retain her position—her head grew giddy, her eyes closed, her grasp relaxed, and as the balustrades had been torn away in the confusion, she would inevitably have fallen amidst the dense crowd, and been crushed to death, had not a strong arm been suddenly thrown round her, just as she was on the point of sinking, while a dreamy recollection that she had been wrapt in a cloak and borne rapidly through a scorching heat, by some one, who as he had caught her in his arms, ejaculated,—“Thank Heaven, I have saved her!” The voice still rung in her ear—it was like, but, ah! it could not be, the voice of De Montfort—was all that memory could recall on her awaking from a long and death like trance.

It was indeed the voice of De Montfort, that

had for an instant arrested the fleeting senses of Isabelle. On the first alarm of fire he had sprung forward to assist her, but it was not without great difficulty, and the exercise of almost herculean strength, that he was enabled at last, after much delay and many hair breadth escapes, to reach her box—it was empty. His first impulse was that of joy—"she is safe—she has left the theatre," exclaimed he, "but Heavens! should she have got amongst the crowd!" He paused, gazed wildly around and discovered her at a little distance, clinging to the pillar. In an instant Isabelle was in his arms—one moment later and she would have been lost.

Taking a cloak which some one in their flight had left behind, he threw it over her lifeless form, hoping that it might in some degree shield her from the heat which was becoming intense.

The beams and planks which they were pulling down in every direction, in order to stop

the progress of the flames, as well as the crowd which still continued to pour through the passages and doorways, interrupted his course, impeded as it was by the fainting form in his arms ; he tried to force a passage but in vain—death stared him in the face on every side. Suddenly a voice close to his ears said, “This way ! this way ! follow me,” and Zanina the gypsy catching him by the sleeve, pulled him in a different direction from the one he had been endeavouring to pursue. Making a sign to her swarthy companion, a man of gigantic stature, to make way through a spot where the crowd was becoming less dense, and again telling De Montfort to follow them, he was soon freed from the suffocating atmosphere he had been breathing, and emerged into the open street ; but upon looking around, with the intention of thanking the gypsy and her companion for their opportune assistance, he found they had disappeared, and were no where to be seen.

At this instant a carriage passed—it was

empty, and he called to the driver, who immediately drew up. Telling him to drive with all speed to the palace, he placed his lifeless burthen on the seat, and springing into it himself, supported her head on his bosom—a feeling of intense joy at thus having rescued her from certain destruction filled his soul—he felt as if he had won her for himself, as if she were indeed all his own—he imprinted a thousand kisses upon her cold lips and cheek, calling her by the most passionate and endearing names—something seemed to whisper to him, that the icy barriers between them were destroyed for ever—that the heart which lay so close to his, would yet beat responsive to his love. He would have recalled her to life, by the hot tears which fell upon her face, by the warm beatings of his own heart, but as if bound in the adamantine chains of death, no broken sigh, no, not the slightest breathing could De Montfort catch—no faint pressure of her little hand returned the passionate clasp of his—it lay cold as ice in his

grasp—no murmured thanks broke from her lips to thrill his soul with rapture—cold as the drifted snow that covers the benighted traveller lay the senseless form of Isabelle upon his bosom.

Ah! had a spark of consciousness returned to her in those moments,—what passionate avowals—what tender revelations of a pure and holy love, would have dissipated the mist of error that concealed the real state of those two hearts from each other.

Soon the liveliest alarm at this long insensibility took the place of De Montfort's first fond joy. Ordering the coachman to drive still faster they shortly arrived at the entrance to that part of the palace where were situated the apartments of the *Dames du Palais*, and bearing Isabelle in his arms from the carriage, the half-distracted De Montfort carried her up the numerous flights of steps and through the long corridor to her boudoir, where, with the assist-

ance of the terrified Victorine, he laid her upon a couch.

Not the least sign of returning consciousness however appeared, and De Montfort, almost frantic, ordered half the faculty in Paris to be sent for, and in the mean time, kneeling beside her, rubbed her temples himself with Hungary water and other restoratives, which Victorine brought him.

The physician attendant on the Queen's household soon came, although to the impatient De Montfort an age seemed to elapse before his arrival. He looked very grave on seeing the condition of Isabelle, and prepared directly to use more powerful restoratives; but, notwithstanding all his skill, several hours passed away before the slightest consciousness returned, and then she seemed only to revive for an instant, to fall from one faint into another, so that the physician found it necessary to sit up with her himself the entire night; but he would not on any account permit De Montfort to remain in

the room after her powers of observation and perception were in the smallest degree restored, as he said her nerves had received a violent shock, and she must be kept perfectly still—he knew not even if brain fever might not yet ensue.

With this fear before his eyes, De Montfort did not dare to contravene the orders of Doctor Pancrace, and spent a watchful and wretched night in the adjoining anti-chamber.

The state of exhaustion and prostration of mental and bodily strength in which Isabelle remained for many days, had a much deeper foundation however than either doctor Pancrace or De Montfort could surmise. In fact, the agitation of mind that Isabelle had endured ever since the night of the ball at Versailles, with the constant exertions she had made to enact a part and to bury her real sentiments not only in the depths of her heart, but even to hide them from herself, had so wrought upon her frame as to have made her for several weeks

previous to the evening of the representation of *Psyche*, tremble at the rustling of a leaf, or the shutting of a door, and therefore the more susceptible of ill effects from the danger and turmoil by which she had all at once found herself surrounded at the theatre.

CHAPTER V.

Hope, of all passions, most befriends us here :
Joy has her tears ; and transport has her death ;
Hope, like a cordial, innocent, though strong,
Man's heart, at once, inspirits and serenens.

YOUNG.

Our waking dreams are fatal ; how I dreamt
Of things impossible ! (could sleep do more ?)
Of joys perpetual in perpetual change !
Of stable pleasures on the tossing wave !
Eternal sunshine in the storms of life.
How richly were my noon-tide trances hung
With gorgeous tapestries of pictur'd joys !

YOUNG.

SEVERAL days passed away in a sort of dreamy unconsciousness and feverish restlessness, before Isabelle was sufficiently recovered, to collect

her scattered thoughts and to reflect upon the past.

She remembered, as we have said before, clinging to the pillar to prevent herself from being hurled into the pit, and how, at the moment her senses were failing, and every object seemed to her glazed eyes to whirl about with inconceivable rapidity, a man had sprung forward and clasped her with a powerful arm, and as he held her closely pressed to his heart, a voice whose thrilling tones had never since ceased to echo in her ear, seemed to express a passionate joy at her preservation. But she could recollect no more; and now it appeared to her but a mocking delusion of her imagination, to suppose that the voice she had heard, could be that of De Montfort—yet it haunted her continually in these hours of exhaustion, and two or three times she sat up, and wildly drew back the curtain, fancying that the same voice in soft accents, was whispering near her couch.

When she had strength to interrogate Victorine upon the subject, she found, to her extreme disappointment, that the latter appeared to be totally ignorant as to by whom, or in what manner her mistress had been conveyed home from the theatre—all she could elicit from her was, that a stranger had hastily entered her apartment, bearing her in his arms apparently lifeless, and had laid her upon a couch in the boudoir, and that he himself, to judge by the soiled and torn appearance of his cloak, and the smell of fire that clung to his garments, must have come direct from the midst of the flames.

Isabelle sighed heavily and silently turned away—it was impossible, she thought but that Victorine must have known De Montfort, had he indeed been her deliverer, and bitter tears of disappointment rolled down her cheeks.

Victorine had in reality, immediately recognised the baron, both by his appearance and by the orders which he had issued for me-

dical advice, and even if she had never seen him before, his agitation with the anxious cares, which he seemed to feel it his right to lavish upon the baroness, together with his conversation with the physician, would have revealed to her his name and rank. But Victorine was acting a part under the direction of a more acute intellect than her own, as we shall presently see.

Neither did she give the slightest hint to her mistress of the excessive agitation, which this stranger, as she chose to consider him, had evinced at her protracted insensibility, or of his having spent the night in the anti-chamber communicating with her apartment, or of the ceaseless inquiries he had made after her, and the many hours he had passed in walking up and down the adjoining gallery, when her fever was at its height—all these particulars were as a sealed book to Isabelle.

“It could not then be De Montfort’s voice I heard,” said Isabelle to herself, with a deep

sigh, after having again questioned Victorine as much as her weak state would permit her to do; "Alas! it was but the illusion of an imagination, which is ever bringing his image before my eyes."

This chagrin and the feverish irritation consequent upon it, retarded the recovery of Isabelle, and all the medicaments prescribed by Doctor Pancrace, were of no avail in restoring her strength, until one morning, during his daily visit, the good doctor accidentally alluded to the escape she had had from the fire, by the fortunate circumstance of the Baron de Montfort's being near enough to rescue her from the imminent danger in which she was placed, and to bear her from the theatre.

This unexpected discovery, while it threw her into an agitation which frightened the unconscious doctor, who saw in her changing colour, nervous tremor, and violent emotion, the indications of excessive debility, did more than all his prescriptions to accelerate her re-

covery. It was not until some time after his departure, that Isabelle could command her feelings sufficiently, so as to be able to express to Victorine her surprise that she had not recognised the Baron de Montfort in the stranger who had conveyed her home.

The adroit *soubrette*, although rather confounded, pleaded with much presence of mind her own anxiety and terror at seeing her mistress in such a plight, as a good excuse for her want of observation, and the unsuspecting Isabelle, too happy at this discovery to find fault with any one, easily believed her assertion.

It was then De Montfort who had saved her—it was in his arms she had fainted at the theatre—they were the tones of his voice, which day and night had rung in her ears, sleeping and waking during her illness.

She overwhelmed Victorine with a thousand questions, but she could get no reply, except that the baron, since it was the baron himself, having laid her upon the sofa and ordered a

physician to be sent for, had immediately disappeared.

“Has the baron made no inquiries—sent no message?” Isabelle demanded in a faltering voice.

Victorine knew of none—the porter had had to answer numerous daily inquiries, but she did not hear the baron’s name mentioned amongst them—the Count de Beaumont had called frequently.

Isabelle’s heart sunk for an instant—she closed her eyes and mused in silence—

“He will certainly come to inquire for me by and by—perhaps come and see me when I am better?” thought she, “and then I may speak to him of the service he has rendered me—I may thank him—perhaps—who knows—Ah! he cannot quite hate me—he has risked his life to save mine—Victorine said the fire had singed his clothes.” (Here her heart beat violently, and a deep flush overspread her face, as De Montfort’s exclamation of “thank Heaven, I

have saved her !” occurred to her mind.) “ Why did I not recover in the carriage? Why was I not able to speak to him? Ah! perhaps he may yet call me Isabelle—*his* Isabelle. O my God!—it will be no crime to try to win his heart—I have been so proud! I have never, never tried to please him.—Yes, he has heard of me through the Count de Beaumont, and he waits until I am fully restored to health to come and see me. In a few days at farthest we shall meet.”

This consciousness that De Montfort had risked his life to save hers, although she did not dare permit herself to think that love could have had any share in it—while it satisfied her pride by placing her in his debt, gave a plea to her inclinations to attempt the conquest of his affection, and hope, ever ready to flatter with her airy structures, now gave her glimpses of a future, fair as the enchanted gardens which the God of Love had conjured up for the habitation of his lovely Psyche.

But day passed away after day—De Montfort came not—sent not—and the visions of hope faded from the imagination of the disappointed Isabelle.

De Montfort, in the mean time, was suffering the most bitter chagrin. Hour after hour, day after day, during the first period of Isabelle's illness, he had lingered in the gallery and anti-chamber of her apartment; that he might not lose a moment in being made aware of any change that should take place.

As her strength began to return and she approached towards convalescence, a feeling of delicacy prevented him from intruding himself into her presence, and looking forward to the pleasure of seeing her when she should have left her chamber, he contented himself with sending her numerous messages of kind inquiry. Deeply mortified at last, that no word, not even one of cold politeness, had been sent to him in return by Isabelle, and thinking that the carelessness of her attendants, in not make

ing her fully aware of his anxiety about her, might be the cause of it, he determined in future to leave a note of inquiry after her health every day, and in these the passionate tenderness of the lover breathed in every line. Still no message—no line—no kind word from Isabelle, and as he found from the physician who still attended her, that although weak and nervous, she was now so far recovered as to admit of her seeing any intimate friend, he resolved to write and request permission to be allowed to visit her.

In this letter at once manly, eloquent, and tender, De Montfort said, that he would entirely avoid alluding to past events, and would only say, that his former blind infatuation could be equalled by nothing, but the sorrow and regret which he now felt for it—that his future destiny must be entirely in her hands, and that he should not dare to reproach her, whatever her determination might be—all he asked at present was, to be admitted as a friend, and to have the

happiness of hearing from her own lips that she would deign to consider him as such. He painted in lively terms the agony her silence inflicted upon him, and while acknowledging that he well merited it, besought her, even if she should refuse his request, to send him, at least, a few lines in reply to his letter.

This epistle De Montfort entrusted to François, desiring him to give it to Victorine, and to wait for an answer. While François was absent, he paced the room up and down, with unequal steps—now quick—now slow, as hope and fear alternated in his bosom. One hour—two hours passed away—it was an age of torture, and unable to wait any longer, he was on the point of proceeding in search of him, when the valet arrived, and with a grave countenance reported, that he had given the letter to Victorine, who had conveyed it immediately to her mistress, and that after waiting a considerable time in expectation of receiving a note or letter, Victorine had at length re-appeared and told

him, that the Baroness said it required no answer.

The Baron turned deadly pale at this announcement, and striving to conceal his agitation from François, said :

“ It must be that the Baroness is ill, otherwise I should have had a reply.”

He then dismissed the valet, and after pacing the room for some time in great agitation, made up his mind that Isabelle had had a relapse, as otherwise it was impossible that she should not have sent him at least a verbal message, and hastily leaving his hotel, he proceeded to her residence to inquire himself about her.

The report which the porter gave of the improved health of the Baroness, while it allayed the fears of De Montfort on that head, added to the misery he felt at having had no notice taken of his letter, and he desired to see Victorine immediately. Victorine appeared, and her replies to his almost inarticulate interrogatories confirmed the statement of the porter, while

she added in confirmation of it, that the Baroness had been able to see one or two friends that morning.

“And my letter,” exclaimed the Baron, with impeded respiration — “the letter I sent by François?”

“I delivered it immediately, to Madame la Baronne,” replied Victorine, with quiet audacity.

“And what said she,” demanded De Montfort, impetuously.

“Madame was setting at her *secrétaire* writing some notes,” replied Victorine; “I do not think, madame considered that the letter contained matters of any consequence, for she merely glanced her eye over it, and throwing it into the *secrétaire*, said, there was no answer—I dare say Madame la Baronne may read it through by and by.”

Victorine had learned her lesson well.

Just at this moment the Marquis de Cressy passed by at a little distance. He seemed to

come from the suite of apartments inhabited by Isabelle.

The Baron bit his lip until the blood burst forth—indignation and jealousy filled his bosom, and hastily returning to his hotel, he bade the triumphant François prepare for their immediate departure from Paris.

Isabelle all this time, like De Montfort, reckoned the weary days, the hours, the minutes, as they past ; each one, as it slowly flitted by, leaving a keener sense of disappointment in her fluttering, anxious heart. Victorine had officiously paraded before her all the notes and cards of inquiry that had been left during her illness ; with an unsteady hand and eager glance, had she looked them over, in hopes, despite of Victorine's assurance to the contrary, that De Montfort's name might be amongst them—but no, his name was no where to be seen.

Soon she received a visit from the Count de Beaumont—others had come, she had seen many, but De Montfort came not—sent not—

and while common acquaintances were prodigal of letters and congratulations, he alone, whom she most wished to see, was silent and absent.

At length Victorine informed her, as if accidentally, of the departure of De Montfort from Paris. Isabelle, thunderstruck, hastily dismissed her attendant, and covering her face with her hands, burst into a passion of tears.

He was gone, gone! and never asked to see her! Alas! it could be only common humanity that brought him to her rescue at the theatre—he cared not if she died—perhaps he wished it, he would then be free.

“Cruel De Montfort, would'st thou had let me perish in the flames. Far, far better, had I died there, than be thus, as I too certainly am, the object of thy detestation.”

And now a sudden terror filled her soul, at thus discovering, as if for the first time, how the whole happiness of her life, her peace of mind, all her energies, and powers of thought and imagination, were concentrated on him,

and in an agony of grief, she felt that she despised herself for permitting his image to obtain so complete a dominion over her; fresh floods of tears came to her relief, and throwing herself on a couch, she sobbed herself asleep.

Leaving the young Baroness for a short time in this state of happy oblivion, from which she was to awake, only to give herself up to bitter reflection and poignant grief, we must now endeavour to unfold, by whom, in what manner, and for what purpose, those secret machinations were carried on, which so effectually prevented any explanation or interchange of sentiment from taking place between De Montfort and Isabelle, placing as it were a new barrier between them, and removing them more effectually than ever from each other, and in order to do this, we must call the attention of our readers to a very efficient actor in this nefarious plot, being no other a person than the Baron de Montfort's favourite valet, François, of whose

former life, before he entered the service of the Baron, we must give a slight sketch.

François Laporte was the foster-brother of Madame de Varville. In early life, when residing in the province of Bretagne, Clementine had been very kind to him, making him numerous little presents out of her pocket money, and always accosting him, whenever she met him in her walks, which happened very frequently, with eager inquiries after her good nurse, of whom she was very fond.

At this period, François was a shepherd's boy in the neighbourhood of the château, where the parents of Madame de Varville resided, but being of an aspiring disposition, and having at the same time an acute and intelligent manner, a gentleman travelling through that part of the country, pleased with the quickness with which he had answered some questions that had been put to him, engaged him in his service, and took him up to Paris in the capacity of an under *laquais*. Here, in

a few years, François so improved himself, as to acquire all the knowledge and accomplishments necessary for a valet-de-chambre, and to these he added no small share of wit, dexterity, and a great aptitude for all sorts of intrigue and knavery, but these last qualities he had the art to conceal beneath an air of open frankness and incorruptible honesty.

It was in the character of valet-de-chambre, to the young Baron de Montfort that Clementine met him in Paris, and as he was the bearer of many a *billet-doux* from his enamoured master, she recognised him with pleasure, and found him a most useful auxiliary in forwarding her designs of captivating and seriously entangling De Montfort.

François accompanied the baron abroad, and on De Montfort's return to Paris, Madame de Varville, as we have seen, though wedded again, felt the keenest resentment on perceiving that he had quite shaken off his former shackles, and had completely disentangled

himself from the enchantments with which, Armida like, she had surrounded him. She therefore sent for François as soon as she perceived the baron's indifference, and gold, added to the ancient influence she had exercised over him, soon made him a willing and able assistant in all her schemes.

The keen eye of François soon discovered the increasing interest which Isabelle began to excite in the breast of the baron, and he immediately informed Madame de Varville of it, and as nothing could be more inimical to her wishes, or could set at naught more the feelings of hatred and revenge with which she was inspired, than a reconciliation between those two parties, she determined, with the assistance of François, to make use of every stratagem she could devise to prevent it.

In pursuance of this plan, the first step was for François to become acquainted with Victorine, the *femme-de-chambre* of Isabelle, and as Victorine was a Breton by birth, as well as

François, and a pretty girl, he did not find this either difficult or disagreeable. Victorine, a credulous and weak-minded girl, dazzled by the gallantry and attention of Monsieur François and still more won over by his promise to marry her, and take her to live in her own province when they should have amassed a little money, was soon completely under his guidance in every respect, and from this proceeded her feigned ignorance of who Isabelle's protector had been on the night of the fire at the theatre, and it was by his direction she likewise suppressed all mention of the many anxious hours De Montfort had passed in the gallery near the apartments of the baroness during her illness, and of the lively joy he evinced when she gave symptoms of returning convalescence.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Great God of Love, that with thy cruel darts
Dost conquer greatest conquerors on ground,
And sett'st thy kingdom in the captive hearts
Of kings and kesars to thy service bound ;
What glory or what guerdon hast thou found,
In feeble ladies tyranning so sore,
And adding anguish to the bitter wound
With which their lives thou lanced'st long afore,
By heaping storms of trouble daily on them more.”

SPENSER.

ISABELLE was not able long to indulge in that solitude, which bitter chagrin and hopeless love made her so anxious to seek. Although a leaden disappointment weighed upon her heart, her returning health left her no plea to absent

herself from her duties near the queen, and soon, like many others, she was obliged to wear the mask of joy and gaiety when all was sad within.

She heard that De Montfort's absence had been but of short duration, and that he was again in Paris, but as yet they had not met, and her eye vainly sought him in all the places of public and private resort.

The Marquis de Cressy too, with the most unwearied perseverance, redoubled his attentions, making himself almost her shadow, notwithstanding all her coldness towards him, and the efforts that she made to shake him off.

Disdain and a feeling nearly allied to terror had taken place of the commiseration and regret which his love, when first discovered, had awakened in her bosom, and she took every opportunity to shew him that his continued attentions were most hateful to her, while he, animated with new hope at finding that the circumstance of her being rescued at the

theatre by De Montfort, of which every one in Paris was aware, had not tended to produce any reconciliation between them, persisted in his assiduities with increased pertinacity.

One day, although more dispirited than usual, Isabelle found that she was expected to attend the Queen to a dress ball in the evening, and recollecting that she had broken the clasp of a diamond necklace which *Marie Therese* had bestowed upon her, and which she wished to wear at this ball, she determined, as she was going to take an airing in her carriage, to go to the jewellers herself, and get it repaired.

After giving it to the jeweller, with many injunctions to finish it at once, and send it home, Isabelle was turning away to depart, when a locket lying on the counter, the identical counterfeit of the one she had so long worn, caught her eye, and taking it up, with much curiosity, she examined it, and inquired to whom it belonged.

The jeweller, not at all surprised that the beauty of this little Venetian *bijou* had attracted

her attention, replied, that it was the property of the dowager Marchioness de Cressy, who had left it with him to mend a spring, which she had accidentally broken.

“The workmanship is exquisite,” added he ; “and although the locket is so small, it contains a beautiful miniature ; but so artfully concealed is the spring that opens it, that I would challenge any one to make a discovery of it, unless previously aware of its position.”

So saying, the jeweller took up the locket, which Isabelle, with some trepidation, had laid down while he was speaking, and pressing an invisible spring beneath the ring through which the chain passed to which it was appended, it immediately flew open, and displayed a highly finished little miniature of the Marquis de Cressy.

“The Marquis told me,” continued the jeweller, “that there was but one other locket similar to this, made by the same artificer, who was a celebrated goldsmith at Venice.”

The blood left Isabelle's cheeks, and then tingled painfully to her throbbing temples.

Was it—could it be possible that a miniature of the Marquis de Cressy had been so dearly prized by her, and was still in her possession?

Her eyes were rivetted on the miniature, which lay open before her, as the thoughts passed through her mind. At this moment she perceived that she was not alone in the shop—some one else had entered—she raised her eyes and beheld De Montfort intently gazing upon her—he had perceived and recognised the miniature, and a deadly pang of jealousy had pierced to his heart's core.

Isabelle forgot the miniature—all the world—on beholding him. It was the first time they had met since the night of the fire; she only remembered that he was there—that he had saved her life and she could hardly speak, as she extended her little white ungloved hand to him, and for an instant a flush of joyful surprise

crossed her still pale cheek—but it was only for an instant ; the chilling coldness of his demeanor, as he scarcely touched her hand, acted like the stroke of the torpedo on her faculties. Could it be a reality?—was it thus they met again? An indistinct inquiry for her health as indistinctly answered, and they were both silent—she made a few steps towards the door, scarce knowing what she did, and he mechanically handed her into her carriage, then slightly bowing without uttering another word he disappeared.

To the coachman's inquiry of, whither he was to drive? Isabelle, choking with suppressed sobs, could scarcely articulate the word 'Home,' while overcome by the discovery of the miniature; and agitated by this short interview with De Montfort, so destructive to all the hopes which, in spite of his silence and absence, she had, almost unknown to herself, continued to indulge in for the last few weeks, she could with difficulty rally her faculties so far as to

prevent herself from fainting. She arrived at the palace, and on alighting from the carriage, she flew to her own apartment, shut the door and turned the key in it, and unlocking the cabinet, took from thence the locket.

An icy coldness pervaded her frame—a dazzling sensation obscured her sight—she sought for the secret spring which the jeweller had shewed her beneath the embossed ring—she pressed it and the locket flew open.

There was a miniature—clouds encompassed her on every side—her hand trembled so violently, she could scarcely hold the locket.

At first all was indistinct—she could discover nothing but a dark shadow upon the ivory—she gazes on it—the mist is dispelled—the handsome features of a young cavalier are pourtrayed before her eyes—It is—no, it is not the Marquis! Heavens! can it be? she looks at it intently, her existence seems concentrated in that moment. Does her sight deceive her?—is it a mockery, a delusion? No—it is a

reality—it is De Montfort—it is he himself—it is her husband !

The painter has represented him in the garb of a knight of the olden time—he looks noble and majestic as he did at the tournament. Yes, it is De Montfort—not the grave and repelling De Montfort she had just seen, but one whose eye is eloquent—whose smile is love.

Isabelle flung herself upon the couch with a burst of tears, but they were not tears of sorrow, and now she saw inscribed, beneath the miniature, in letters of gold enamel, the name of *Adhemar de Montfort*, and she pressed it again and again to her lips and to her heart.

Yes—he, the cold, the careless, had once knelt at her feet—had once breathed to her the passionate vows of love, had sworn to her, that faith which he so unknowingly ratified afterwards at the altar. This vision of her heart's young affection was now identified with the all-absorbing love that filled her soul—she might think of De Montfort as he had once been to

her, and dream that future days might recall him to his first love. No, she could not be entirely unhappy while she recollected that his vows had once, with his own free will, been given to her, and her hand which he had scarcely deigned to touch that day, had once been wet with his tears, and covered with his kisses, on the night when they had last met in the church of the Salute.

And then she recurred to the bunch of rosemary, and to the night visions inspired by those symbolical and charmed flowers; "yes," she exclaimed, "yes, now indeed memory and undying love, have taken possession of my soul, and when least expected I have found him, and that magic mirror, it was then the form of De Montfort I saw; but alas! to what end did the gipsy so truly discover to me the secret of my love if De Montfort and I are to be for ever estranged. No, a kind heaven can not always will it to be thus."

In such soliloquies did the lovely Isabelle in-

dulge, until the time came for her attendance upon the queen. And De Montfort? he now had the solution of *all*, of her disdainful silence, her neglect of his letters, her determination of not admitting him to her presence. It was all plain before his eyes. She returned, oh agony to think it! the love of De Cressy, and should he still seek for explanations? never! Never would he write to her again. He would leave Paris and go into Normandy. Madman! why had he come back to it so soon? why? Alas! it was because he could not tear her image from his heart. But he was determined now—he never would run the risk of meeting her again, he would throw up his place at court, and bury himself entirely in the country.

That very evening he sent in his resignation, and without giving any explanation to his disappointed father, except that of detesting Paris and being weary of the life of a courtier, without even waiting for a reply from the king, he

ordered his horse to be saddled, and telling his valet to pack up his things and follow him, left the hateful city, and travelling day and night at full speed, as if hoping by escaping as quickly as he could from the scene of his misery, to calm the violent agitation of his spirits, arrived at his château in Normandy.

But here in his château, he found no panacæ for his regrets. The place was no longer the same neglected old place as when he had last seen it. The hand of taste was visible in the distribution of the furniture, in the ornament of the rooms, in the arrangement of the gardens and pleasure grounds. Even in his rapid progress through his demesne, and notwithstanding all his pre-occupation, the newly built tenements, and improved look of the peasant's cottages struck his eye, so different from their former dilapidated condition.

The old servants who had known him since a boy, were garrulous in praise of their young mistress, lamenting her long absence, and in-

quiring when they might hope to see her again.

Pierrot, the old gardener, had been sedulous in his care to keep the gardens trim and tasteful as she had arranged them, and while he accompanied the baron through the parterres and alleys, he fondly loitered in the grotto of shells which madame had adorned with her own hands, and paused to twine the branches of a rose-bush over her favourite bower. And then when De Montfort by chance turned his steps towards the suite of apartments which he remembered his mother to have occupied when he was a boy, the housekeeper was at his side to point out to him the little boudoir where Madame la Baronne, and Mademoiselle Eulalie were used to spend their mornings, and to shew him the beautiful embroidery which their skilful fingers had wrought, and the paintings done by Isabelle herself, which hung upon the walls.

De Montfort shut himself up entirely in the

château. He had not even the society of his aunt, the Baroness d'Anglures, or that of his cousins. They had left that part of the country much about the time in which he had made his hurried journey thither, and indeed they had probably crossed him on the road, as they were *en route* for Paris.

A deep melancholy had for some months previous taken possession of the pretty Eulalie. Pierre Delamare had left the neighbourhood without ever coming to any explanation with the young girl. Various were the surmises and reports in circulation concerning him, and although but few of them reached the ear of Eulalie, still she heard sufficient to keep her in that state of uncertainty so withering to the heart of the young and gay. Her spirits left her, she became pale and thin, and her mother, much alarmed for her health, came to the determination of going with her daughters to Paris, hoping that variety and change of scene might re-animate her drooping child.

To this resolution, the baroness had in a great measure been led by the advice of the good Abbé de Saye. He saw with pain the ravages that some hidden canker was making in the scarcely matured bloom of the once gay little Eulalie, and that his favourite Josephine likewise looked pale and sad, and he thought that a total change from the quiet pursuits of a country life, to the ever varying bustle of the great city of Paris, would, under the care of so watchful a mother, be most conducive in restoring them to their former cheerfulness.

Josephine had in reality at last penetrated the secret of Eulalie, and too generous and good to think of herself, or to rejoice at the improbability of Henri Desguy's ever making any impression upon the pre-occupied heart of her dear little sister, she grieved to think that her young affections should have been given to one, whom she more than suspected had put it out of his own power ever to make her his wife.

Such was the position in which those young girls were placed when they arrived in Paris, Eulalie, pining like a blighted rose-bud ; Josephine, grieving for her beloved sister, while the good, but not very clear-sighted Baroness d'Anglures, secretly wept at not being able to discover the cause of the dejection of her dear children. But a short time was lost before they sought out Isabelle, and as she clasped her little favourite in her arms, the languid eye of Eulalie looked so bright, and her smile was so much akin to that of former days, that Josephine could scarcely put bounds to her rapture at the sight.

In listening to all that Josephine had to say to her in private about her little sister, Isabelle almost forgot to think of her own perplexities and unhappiness. That Pierre Delamare had taken priest's orders, Josephine had learned from an authentic source the day preceding that on which they left Normandy. Madame d'Anglures had not yet heard it, and indeed

she was entirely ignorant of Eulalie's attachment to him.

How to break it to poor Eulalie, was the point now to be considered, yet that done, and the first shock over, Josephine was sure, and Isabelle agreed with her in thinking, that Eulalie's proper pride and natural good sense would enable her after a time, to get over the disappointment, and that her present uncertainty, now hoping, now despairing, was much more likely to destroy all chance of her recovering her health and happiness.

"And does Eulalie know that you have discovered the cause of her melancholy?" demanded Isabelle, during one of those secret discussions.

"Yes," replied Josephine; "she knew it for some weeks before we left Normandy, for I told her so. At first she hid her face and was silent, then she confessed her love with much reluctance and many tears."

"And what said she of the cruel conduct of Delamare?" asked Isabelle.

“She tried to exonerate him from any portion of blame,” replied Josephine, “by declaring that his inexplicable conduct must have entirely arisen from the reports circulated in the neighbourhood that she was to give her hand to Henri Desguey, the provost’s son, (here the colour heightened a little on the cheek of Josephine), and that perhaps the unintentional appearance on her part, of flirting now and then with Henri, had corroborated those reports, which, together with the impossibility of Pierre’s finding out the real state of her heart, had prevented him from coming to any explanation with her, and had made him leave the country in disgust.”

“My poor Eulalie! how has she deceived herself!” exclaimed Isabelle.

“It was in vain that I attempted to combat this sort of self condemnation, and to shew her how easy it was for Pierre to find out the truth of those surmises, either by frankly and openly avowing his love to her, and asking for an an-

swer from her own lips, or by entreating me with whom he had once been on terms of brotherly intimacy, to tell him if there was indeed any truth in those reports."

"And what said she to this," demanded Isabelle.

"To all these representations, and to every thing else I could urge," replied Josephine, "Eulalie only replied by tears and sighs, exclaiming, that if fault there was, it must be all on her side, as it was impossible Pierre could ever act in an ungenerous or unkind manner."

"You knew not of his having taken priest's orders then?" said Isabelle.

"No," replied Josephine, "had I done so, I should have certainly told her all, and now we must seek the first favourable opportunity to do so."

"Did she tell you if there was any difference, any increased coldness, in Pierre Delamare's manner towards her latterly?" inquired Isabelle.

"On my putting the question to my poor

little sister," replied Josephine; "she burst into fresh floods of tears, and calling me her dear Josephine, said she would confide in me entirely. Yes, she owned Pierre's manner was changed — sometimes he would start up and fly away from her, next moment he would press her hand and look at her with passionate tenderness. Yes, she knew he loved her, though he had never told her so in words, and the two or three last times they met, he had spoken to her of the cold hearts and inconstancy of woman, and of a nunnery being a refuge from every disappointment. 'You see Josephine,' she said, in a voice interrupted by sobs, 'it was jealousy, it was all my own fault, he thought I loved another, and if Pierre has left me for ever, I will go into a convent.'"

"It is plain," rejoined Isabelle, "that he had made up his mind at the time to become a priest. It is not religion—it is ambition that has got the better of love, and his godfather, the archbishop's promises have prevailed, and

now he would gladly tear our dear little Eulalie from her friends and the world, and immure her in a convent ! No, it must not be ; when her eyes are open to the heartlessness and selfishness of his conduct, our friendship must console her and restore her to herself.”

CHAPTER VII.

He stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart,
And arm'd himself in panoply complete
Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms
Bright as his own.—COWPER.

FOR three or four days Isabelle and Josephine arose, with the intention of discovering to Eulalie, the impassable barrier that was placed between herself and her lover, but her fragile frame seemed so unable to bear any sudden shock, that they both trembled at the explanation they were going to make.

“ Dear Josephine, it must be done, and at

once," said Isabelle; "we will try to elevate the mind of Eulalie—to make her feel that she is called upon to make a great sacrifice; I will then undertake to reveal to her that Pierre has entered the church. To-morrow I will take you and Eulalie to hear the most celebrated preacher in Paris. Madame d'Anglures has a cold and cannot accompany us—it is so much the better. I will arrange with her that you are both to pass the entire day with me, as I am then going to take you an excursion into the country. Do you consent? will you leave it all to me?"

"Do I consent? most willingly dear friend," said Josephine, embracing her with tears in her eyes.

They parted, and Isabelle went in search of Madame d'Anglures, who immediately agreed that the young girls should spend the following day with Isabelle.

The Abbé Bossuet, now in the zenith of his popularity, was at this time the favourite preacher in Paris. Crowds attended him wherever he

went, and it was almost impossible for a stranger to find standing room in the church where he preached. By going very early, however, Isabelle and her young friends were fortunate in obtaining places sufficiently near the pulpit to enable them to see and hear him to the greatest advantage. They were at once astonished, overwhelmed, and melted, by his eloquence, but particularly Eulalie, who from the state of her mind and spirits, was the most susceptible of devotional impressions. She spoke of him after they left the church with enthusiasm, and would willingly have listened to him the entire day.

After the service was over, Isabelle led her young friends to the gardens of the Thuilleries, those beautiful gardens being then, as now, the favourite resort of every class of people in Paris, and taking them into a shady avenue that seemed to be deserted by the crowd which thronged the more public walks, turned the conversation on the private history of the Abbé, which was the more easily done, as his sermon

was still the theme of Eulalie's enthusiastic praise.

After a few turns, when they had taken their seats on a stone bench beneath the shade of a large linden tree, Isabelle said: "There is something romantic in the history of the Abbé's early life, and of his entrance into the church, did you ever happen to hear any of the particulars of it?"

"Never;" replied Eulalie, roused from the languor now so habitual to her, to something like her former energy by the Abbé's sermon, "do dear Isabelle, tell me all you know about him?"

"In early youth," rejoined Isabelle, "he was betrothed to the beautiful and amiable Mademoiselle Desvieux, whom he passionately loved, and by whom he was as dearly beloved in return. Friends and fortune smiled upon a union which was only postponed until young Bossuet should have finished his studies; but in the mean time, the talents which he displayed, and the over-

powering eloquence which he possessed, seemed to point out the church, as the profession best suited to bring to perfection, and to be adorned and benefitted by such high gifts. Bossuet withstood for some time the advice and persuasions of his relatives and friends, but when the lovely and high-minded Mademoiselle Desvieux, his intended bride, stifling all selfish and worldly considerations, and looking only to the eternal as well as the temporal welfare and honour of her beloved, added her entreaties to theirs, the young Bossuet at last consented, and taking the vows of celibacy, bade adieu to the pomps and vanities of the world, becoming as you see, the brightest ornament of the church."

"What strength of mind Mademoiselle Desvieux possessed," exclaimed Eulalie, almost sorrowfully, while Josephine, terrified at the experiment that she saw Isabelle was going to make on the feelings of her dear little sister, scarcely dared to breathe.

"And you, dear Eulalie—do you not think

you could have done the same?" said Isabelle, inquiringly.

"I?" replied Eulalie, and she looked almost terrified and rose from the seat.

"Yes, you," said Isabelle, gently detaining her.

"See, how charming the day is, and we are quite alone—let us sit here a little longer, and talk the matter over. Mademoiselle Desvieux must doubtless have felt many a severe pang at being, for ever, separated in this world from the man she loved—but she hears his name mentioned with applause, she dwells upon his fame—she reverences his calling—she listens to, she reads his admirable discourses—she knows, that, though disunited on earth, they will meet in Heaven, and that it is to her alone, that he owes all that he now is."

"It is beautiful!" said Eulalie, with enthusiasm, and Josephine thought in her own mind, "How unlike to him is Pierre!"

"Do you not think?" continued Isabelle,

“let us suppose, for the sake of argument—let us fancy that you yourself Eulalie, love some one very passionately.”

“That I love some one very passionately?” said Eulalie, turning pale.

“Yes; just for example let us say—who shall I say?—suppose we say your cousin Pierre.—Yes, we will say that you are very fond of your cousin Pierre Delamare—you know you told me that as children you were always together—well then, let us suppose that you were engaged to him, and that he displayed such talents, such eloquence as the Abbé Bossuet. Do you not think — would you not rather — ”

“O Heavens!—Pierre has then taken the vows?” exclaimed Eulalie, and she fell back senseless on the bench.

Isabelle was thunderstruck at the startling and unforeseen effect this conversation had upon Eulalie. She had not contemplated her drawing so rapid a conclusion — she only

wished to instil into her mind at first, the possibility of her being called upon to make so great a sacrifice ; and then intended, when they were in the carriage on their country excursion, gently to reveal to her the whole truth. The frightened Josephine flew to a fountain hard by, and endeavoured to take up a sufficiency of the crystal element in the hollow of her hand to throw on the face of her little sister, wetting her handkerchief well at the same time, and placing it on her forehead, while Isabelle, supporting her head, looked eagerly around for some person who would have the kindness to assist in removing her to the carriage, which waited for them at the entrance into the gardens—no one however, was to be seen in this secluded avenue. Seeing that Eulalie still continued in a faint, notwithstanding the application of the water, Isabelle was on the point of sending Josephine to seek for assistance, when she perceived the Marquis de Cressy enter the avenue by a cross alley at no great distance

from them, walking slowly and with his eyes cast down, apparently in a deep study.

The marquis was in reality, at that moment, meditating upon Isabelle and upon a communication which the Marchioness de Varville, whom he had been escorting in a different part of the gardens, had just made him, namely, that Isabelle's secret liking for a husband who detested her, was the cause of her indifference towards him and every one else. The marchioness hating Isabelle, and greedy of admiration, wished, if possible, to fix the handsome De Cressy in her own diminished train.

To keep Isabelle divided from De Montfort, was not sufficient—De Cressy must likewise be detached, and this day she had made a first step in this her secondary, but much desired project, by endeavouring to impress on him the utter hopelessness of his pursuit—but the result of it was, as we shall see, far different from what she had looked for.

De Cressy, gay, careless and inconsiderate,

had not a bad heart. The levity and indulgence of the age in which he lived, together with the very peculiar position, in which Isabelle was placed, had induced him early to form, and unremittingly to pursue, the plan of trying to win her affections—to separate her from De Montfort, and after a divorce to make her his own wife. But this insinuation of the Marchioness de Varville, seemed all at once to open his eyes to the real feelings of Isabelle, and to recal to his mind a thousand little circumstances before unmarked, which confirmed it; and indignation against De Montfort, and pity for Isabelle, were, at this moment, the predominant sentiments of his soul.

He had just entered, as we have said before, the avenue, when raising his eyes from the ground, he beheld the group of females, and immediately recognizing the Baroness de Montfort to be one of them, eagerly hastened to offer his assistance. Eulalie was just recovering when he approached, and she unclosed her

eyes as he was bending down over her with much commiseration and admiration too, for her *petite* form looked exquisitely beautiful, as in order to give her air, Isabelle had untied her scarf and taken off her hood, allowing her luxuriant tresses to fall negligently over her neck.

Eulalie was in too much despair, even to observe the marquis, and her evident affliction only increased the interest with which De Cressy gazed upon her, while Isabelle, hastily tying on her scarf and replacing her hood, besought him to aid in supporting her to the carriage. This he willingly did, and hurrying through the most private egress from the gardens, they found the equipage, which Josephine, who had run on before, had spied out and beckoned to approach, ready to receive them. Rapidly informing the marquis, as he was about to hand her into the carriage, that those young girls were her cousins, daughters of the Baroness d'Anglures, Isabelle desired

the coachman to drive to the palace, where she and Josephine lavished the tenderest attentions, that sisterly affection and friendship could bestow upon the unhappy Eulalie.

The first shock of this discovery being over and a week having passed away, Eulalie displayed more calmness and energy of mind, than her sister and friend had reckoned upon. She saw the die was cast—Pierre and she were separated for ever. Neither could she in her own heart, entirely exonerate him from duplicity of conduct—why had he not told her his wishes, his intention—perhaps she might, (and here she sighed deeply).—Ah! no, she never could have had the courage of Mademoiselle Desvieux, and then if it should have been because he thought she loved another. The idea was dreadful—yes, the world had lost every charm—what was there worth living for now?—why should not she retire from it likewise?

Isabelle and Josephine listened to her with the utmost sympathy, and the former, kissing her

affectionately, said : “ My sweet little Eulalie, promise me you will wait one year before you decide—you will not refuse me this ? ”

Eulalie wept and promised, and Isabelle thought that many things might happen in one year.

Meantime, the Marquis de Cressy had discovered that his mother and the Baroness d’Anglures, had been old friends and school-fellows, having been educated in the same convent. He contrived immediately, that a renewal of their former intimacy should take place, and Isabelle already began to build upon the future for Eulalie.

The anxiety of Isabelle to occupy, to amuse, to distract the thoughts of Eulalie from dwelling upon the past, was of use to herself, by giving her a constant occupation. She hurried her little friend from one place of resort to another, shewed her all the works of art in the city, all the beauties of nature in the surrounding country, all the enchantments of Versailles. She

told of the tilts—of the tournaments—of the grand dresses of the knights, and called upon the Marquis de Cressy, who frequently, as it appeared by mere accident, crossed their path, to aid in her narrations. This, he the more willingly exerted all his wit and talent to do, from suspecting that the paleness and fragile delicacy of Eulalie arose from some secret disappointment, and, without being aware that Cupid was at this very moment meditating an inroad upon his own heart, felt all his sympathies awakened for the young girl. The very smiles that Isabelle bestowed on him when he expressed an interest in her little *protégée*, so different from her late haughty coldness, made him see but too plainly that she would much rather his attentions were directed there, than towards herself.

Many things combined to make Isabelle look upon him with more amenity of late, to her discovery of the real donor of the locket, so long the mystery of her existence, by the minia-

ture which it contained, was now added, a clear perception of the interest with which the Marquis regarded her pretty little companion, and she began to think that a deeper feeling than mere compassion for the drooping state of her health, might be the result of his eagerness to please and amuse her.

The Marquis on his side, could not be blind to the trouble Isabelle took to set off her little favourite to the best advantage in his eyes, and this, united with the recollection of circumstances unnoted before, which had occurred since the return of De Montfort from abroad, and which now flashed across his mind, bringing every day, more and more a conviction, and at first it was a painful one, that the Marchioness de Varville's assertions were true, gave a final death blow to all his long cherished hopes.

The gay, light-hearted Marquis, however, was not at all likely to break his heart for any woman, and although he had pursued Isabelle with much pertinacity, while he thought her

heart was free, he now found that instead of fretting at the discovery he had made, it was much better philosophy to attempt to console the pretty Eulalie, whose eye he observed already brightened whenever he approached, and it must be owned, that his frequent visits had something to do with her improved health and spirits, although she secretly vowed since Pierre lived no longer for her, never to think of any one else—a resolution which she was quite satisfied she should most religiously keep.

Just at this period too, an incident occurred, which helped not a little to renovate the drooping spirits of Eulalie and to turn her thoughts for a time into another channel.

She was standing one day at the window, looking out into the street at a procession which was just passing, and the Marquis de Cressy, who had been paying a morning visit, was leaning on the back of a chair beside her, endeavouring to engage her in conversation, while Madame d'Anglures and Josephine were em-

ploying themselves at their embroidery frames. Suddenly the notes of a *cornemuse* were heard beneath the window; it was but indifferently played, but it soon ceased, and the voice of a young peasant girl was heard in its stead, singing in soft monotonous tones, an old Breton ballad, while a boy at her side, holding the now silent *cornemuse* in his hand, joined his voice to hers in the *rêfrain*.

Eulalie was immediately attracted by the simple strain, and listened attentively while the following verses were sung:

“O if I go to the wars afar,
Whither I’m bound to go—
Where shall I leave my gentle love,
Where my young bride bestow?”

Then stepped forth his elder brother—
“By the love you bear me I pray,
Let me place her within my daughter’s bower,
Noble damsels are they.”

He scant had ridden from the hall,
Scant through the portal wide;
When young and old with jibe and jeer,
Beset the weeping bride.

“ Come doff thy robe of the crimson silk,
And this russet garment wear ;
For thou must hie thee away to the *landes*,
To keep our sheepfolds there.”

For seven long years the poor young bride
Could nothing do but weep ;
But after that she sweetly sang,
Sang whilst she kept the sheep.

And now a brave knight returning home,
From wars in a far countryé ;
Heard

Thus far had they proceeded in the ballad, when Eulalie, who had been attentively observing the performers, uttered an exclamation of joyful surprise, and springing forward to meet Isabelle, who at this moment entered the room, exclaimed :

“ It is Angelique!—our poor little Angelique whom we met in Normandy—but she is so pale and thin, and Jean is pale and thin, and Mador looks meagre and starved, and the poor blind old man—where is he ?”

If the marquis thought Eulalie looked lovely and interesting in her languor and dejection, he could not but own that her beauty was much increased by the bright joy and sympathy which the sight of those poor peasants called up, and while Madame d'Anglures sent the servant to inquire about them and bring them into the hall, he listened with pleased attention to Eulalie's animated account of who they were, where she had seen them, and of the poor blind grandfather.

The children were brought into the hall, and Angelique wept with joy at finding into whose presence they were so unexpectedly introduced.

Their story was a short and simple one. They had travelled about with the old man, who seemed to have plenty of money, from place to place, until about two months ago when he was suddenly taken ill at a lonely *cabaret*, where they intended to rest for the night, about three leagues from Paris. All assistance, or any remedy they were able to

procure was of no avail. They were far from medical aid, and he died in a few hours, being speechless from the time he was first taken ill.

They were sure he must have had money about him, but what became of it they could not tell. At first, they were in too much grief to give the subject a thought, and when they did, the people of the house said, that they had scarcely found sufficient in his leathern purse to bury him; thus they were thrown houseless and alone upon the wide world. The only thing they had in their possession, belonging to their beloved grandfather, was the old *cornemuse* on which Jean had learnt to play imperfectly, and in the capacity of wandering ballad singers, they had managed to pick up a few *sous* here and there, but they were frequently without a shelter and often hungry.

Poor Mador, their little dog, was the only friend they had—he would never leave them. Once, seeing how starved he looked, although

it made their hearts bleed to part with him, they gave him to the children at a farm house where they had received a night's lodging, who promised to take care of him and treat him well, but in a week after he had joined them again, having got away and followed in their track.

Angelique wept while she related this sad history, and Jean, who was much sobered in his appearance since they had last seen him, kept his eyes fixed upon the ground with a dejected air. All Angelique's earrings and holiday clothes had been long since sold and their poverty stricken garb suited well with their meagre looks.

Their compassionate auditors scarcely heard their little story out, before they sent them, with Mador, who looked as meagre as themselves, to the buttery, and after a short discussion, it was arranged that Angelique should be enrolled amongst the household servants and after a time, if found capable of the

situation, advanced to the dignity of waiting maid to the young ladies, while the Marquis, willing to do a pleasure to Eulalie, proposed that Jean should have a place in his own stable, and that Mador—but here Eulalie interrupted him with so bright a smile of thanks as made him mentally ejaculate, ‘What a lovely little creature,’ telling him at the same time, that Mador was to be her own particular care. Thus all was settled, and the poor ballad-singers were soon made aware of the wonderful change in their situation. Jean, it is true, looked rather wistfully at Mador, when he heard that he was to remain with Angelique, however he consoled himself in a degree by thinking, that while the Baroness continued to stay in Paris, he would try and visit him every day.

CHAPTER VIII.

Nor peace nor ease the heart can know,
Which like the needle true,
Turns at the touch of joy or woe,
But, turning, trembles too.

GREVILLE.

It seems a strange anomaly in some human hearts, and yet it is one, if we use our powers of observation, that we may see passing before us every day. We mean that of being susceptible of the tenderest impressions, at the very moment they are smarting from the severest of disappointments. We do not say that it is thus with every one, but it is most

certainly very often the case, and perhaps never more frequently than when a secret sympathy—a compassionate thought that says, “she has had a bitter disappointment and so have I—ah! I know how to feel for her,” presents itself to the mind. And thus does love often try, by sharpening another arrow, to cure the wound that his former shaft has inflicted; and thus did the Marquis begin to feel with respect to the pretty Eulalie. Love, which had before blinded him, now rendered him clear sighted, and he perceived that from the beginning he had had no chance of Isabelle. Neither was he so mortified, on finding that it was De Montfort she loved, as he would have been had she preferred the Duke de Coaslin, or any other of her numerous admirers, to him. Perhaps, he was even surprised at himself, for enduring the discovery with so much philosophy, but so it was, and how can we pretend to fathom all the recesses of another’s heart, when we often remain

for ever ignorant of all the turnings and windings of our own?

After a few weeks' longer sojourn in Paris, Madame d' Anglures proposed to return into the country. She persuaded Isabelle to get leave from her royal mistress to accompany them thither for a short time ; and, hearing the Marquis say that he was going to visit an uncle in a neighbouring province, gave him likewise an invitation to join their circle at her château, which he willingly accepted, this being the grand point he wished to gain, in proposing to visit this old uncle, whom his mother never could prevail on him to go and see before.

Isabelle's heart throbbed at the very idea of going into the neighbourhood of the Chateau de Beaumont, where she knew De Montfort still remained ; and hope, ever ready with her illusive dreams, began immediately to erect anew a thousand airy castles—' De Montfort was there—perhaps they might meet.' Arrived in Normandy, the consciousness of his vicinity

to her gave a new charm to every well remembered scene. She longed, but did not dare, to venture into the grounds of De Beaumont. Already she had spent three days at the Baroness d' Anglures' and the name of De Montfort had not been once mentioned, but each morning she had arisen with the dawn, and, accompanied by Eulalie, who was her constant companion, had walked to a point at some distance, from whence she could espy the blue smoke [curling around the distant towers of the Chateau de Beaumont, and sometimes she would think of the peaceful days she had passed within its walls and sigh on recollecting how little the image of De Montfort then troubled her repose.

“ Ah why did he not stay with his uncle at Constantinople,” she would mentally ejaculate “ and leave my mind free and unfettered as it was then ?”

The fourth day arrived, and the Baron de Montfort having heard, by this time, that his

aunt, for whom he had a high respect, was returned to her château, hastened over to see her.

With the exception of the Abbé de Saye, he found no one with her in the salon, the young people having gone out early on some excursion. The baron looked pale and low spirited, and Madame d'Anglures did not dare to tell him that Isabelle had accompanied her from Paris, she merely regretted that her daughters should be absent as she wished much to present them to him. His abode in Paris, and his cousins living always in the country, had made them strangers to each other, since they were quite children, but if he would come and spend a few days with them, and she proposed it should be on the morrow when she expected a party to dinner, it would give her more pleasure than she could say.

It was impossible the baron could refuse an invitation so kindly given, and from so near a relative, and one that he really esteemed, and although he had a strong disinclination to give

up his misanthropic solitude, still there were many things that he wished to hear of—perhaps a lurking desire to hear the name of Isabelle mentioned, was his most powerful inducement, and so he consented to come. Although he paid a pretty long visit to his aunt, who detained him with different particulars relating to her *séjour* at Paris, hoping all the time, that the walking party might return before he went, they did not appear, and the baron left the château in perfect ignorance of every thing relating to Isabelle.

Isabelle heard with much disappointment that De Montfort had been with Madame d'Anglures during their absence; nevertheless, when she understood that he was to dine there on the following day, she thought perhaps it was best, that their first meeting should be in a crowd, particularly when she elicited from Madame d'Anglures, that her own name had not been once alluded to during his visit—all the country

neighbours of the baroness were invited, and it was to be a large party.

Josephine and Eulalie were dying to see De Montfort—a man who could treat so beautiful a creature as their dear Isabelle, with indifference, must, in their opinion, resemble the frightful ogre of a fairy tale ; and it was in vain their mother told them, to the contrary,—they would not believe her.

Of what Isabelle thought of him, they were entirely ignorant, as they had never ventured even to mention his name to her.

Isabelle was so bewildered at the idea of meeting De Montfort on the morrow, that she felt incapable of attending to any conversation, or of giving a coherent answer when appealed to for her opinion of the preparations the young people immediately began to make for the approaching fête, which their mother had kept in reserve until now, as an agreeable surprise. What Isabelle had most ardently wished for, now that it approached, almost filled her

with terror, the thousand little plans that she had formed, that she had dreamed of since the discovery of the miniature, melted into air—yet was there an excess of pleasure mingled with this terror. Pleading fatigue from her walk, she retired to her own apartment ; there, she took the locket from her bosom where it had hung ever since—opened it—looked at the speaking likeness of De Montfort as a miser does at his secret treasure, kissed it passionately, and then hid it again, as if afraid that the bright sunbeams, which glanced into her room, should espy it. What would De Montfort think, what would he say on finding her at the chateau ? But what signified it, he would be there, she should behold him again, no coldness on his part should deter her from talking to him of the night at the theatre. Ah ! had he not loved her once ? could any future conduct of his, erase that dear remembrance from her mind ? None, it was the cordial that kept her heart from breaking.

The hour for the assembling of the *convives* at the château of Madame d'Anglures was arrived.

With a fluttering heart, Isabelle watched the opening of the door, as guest after guest was ushered into the salon—they were all old acquaintances. Isabelle had received their greetings, but she looked in vain for De Montfort, he was not amongst them.

After waiting for some time, the Baroness d'Anglures, inwardly much displeased, led the way to the *salle à manger*, while Isabelle, terrified lest the baron should have discovered her sojourn at the château, and absented himself on that account, notwithstanding her usual self-command, could scarcely control her feelings.

They were all seated at the dinner table, when the baron made his appearance. He approached his aunt, by whom a seat was reserved for him, and making, in a low voice, what Isabelle considered must be a satisfactory apology, by the smile with which it was re-

ceived, bowed gracefully to the rest of the company, most of whom he knew, and placed himself beside Madame d'Anglures.

It was not until after he was seated, that he recognized Isabelle, who was nearly opposite to him. She sat beside the Abbé de Saye, and was looking very pale, with a timid air and downcast eyes. Her courage had forsaken her as De Montfort entered the room, and she dreaded lest he might feel as if a plot had been laid for him. Nevertheless, when she raised her eyes, and perceived his look of joyful surprise, her colour slightly heightened, and a pleased expression played about her beautiful mouth, as she returned his salutation.

It was, however, with the greatest difficulty that she kept her place at table, and feigned to eat a little of the many viands which the good abbé recommended her to partake of, as they were handed round.

“This *perdreau aux truffes* is admirable, and this *mauviette au gratin* delicious,” exclaimed

he, "but you do not eat any thing my dear child, I have not seen you before, since your abode in Paris, and methinks the air there has taken away both your appetite and colour ; you looked as blooming as a young Hebe when you left this. Ah ! those courts are sad places, their pleasures undermine both health and spirits ; but if you persevere in your good beginning of rising with the lark, and breathing the pure air of our hills and valleys, as my dear little Eulalie tells me you have done in her company those some mornings, you will soon regain all your former vivacity and good looks, I have no doubt."

Thus did the old abbé run on, while enjoying the good dinner Madame d'Anglures had provided, and Isabelle secretly rejoiced that she had the loquacious kind-hearted old man beside her, whose unremitting endeavours to entertain her, prevented the necessity of her talking much herself.

Once only she had the courage to look over at

the baron, who appeared to occupy himself alternately with Madame d'Anglures and his cousin Eulalie, between whom he was seated, and then she observed that he looked much paler and thinner than he had done when he so triumphantly carried off the best prizes at the tournament.

"Alas! he is not well," thought she, and her eyes filled with tears. At that very moment the baron turned his full gaze upon her, and she felt the blood rush to her temples, to her fingers ends, and as suddenly retreat. Her confusion however, passed entirely unnoticed save by him.

It was a merry party. The provost's voice was heard above the rest, discussing the affairs of state with a neighbouring viscount, who had not been at court for forty years, while his pretty daughters Leonore and Adele conversed in softer murmurs with the viscount's sons. Henri Desguey seemed to have transferred his attentions to the happy looking Josephine, but

was in reality asking a thousand questions about Eulalie, and the other guests were discussing various country matters, between the pauses of their knives and forks.

Isabelle tried to give all her attention to an account the good abbé was giving her, of an excursion he had made in his youth, when in the army, to the valley of Argeles and the mountains surrounding it; but her answers to some questions he put to her, were so *distract* that at first he felt a secret chagrin at her apparent absence of mind, but upon recollecting that the Baron de Montfort sat opposite to her, he excused her, and thought within himself, “poor child, how pitiable is her situation! to be so lovely, and yet to be united to a man who flies from her and cannot endure her.—Truly, I wish she were the lady abbess of some neighbouring convent; how much happier she would be, and what good she would do, for she is kind and charitable as an angel!”

In the evening, a numerous addition to the

party made them a crowded assembly. Chance placed Isabelle in a position near enough to De Montfort to address him. She summoned up all her courage, and put to him some questions relative to the old domestics at the chateau De Beaumont. He answered her gently and kindly, but the look of joy that was in his eyes when he had first seen her was gone. In fact, he had put a wrong construction upon the starting tear that he had marked, and her subsequent confusion, when he caught her glance at dinner—to a jealous man, every trifle is “confirmation strong as proofs of Holy Writ,”—and with him, whose letters had been despised, whose visits had been rejected, could it be otherwise?—Nevertheless, the memory of the Church of the Salute was in her heart, and she tried to continue the conversation. Soon a brighter expression crossed his face, and Isabelle felt courage to allude to the night at the theatre.

There is often complete solitude in a crowd—

Isabelle felt it—every one was occupied with their own amusements—nobody minded them, and they were quite alone. They stood beside a small table covered with prints and books, in the deep recess of an open window, looking out upon the terraced garden, and the thick folds of the crimson drapery of the curtains partly shaded them from observation. It was a dark, still night, without a moon, with a bright star twinkling here and there in the heavens, while the profusion of lights in the lofty salon and the suite of apartments thrown open to accommodate the numerous guests, made this obscurity without still more palpable.

The baron said something inarticulately, in reply to her mention of the night of the fire, Isabelle could not catch it, but it vibrated to her heart—

“I have never been able to thank you,” continued Isabelle in a timid voice, “to tell you how grateful I am to you, for rescuing me from the danger that was round me on every

side—since then, I have only seen you once, and that was but for an instant—I had hoped,” here Isabelle’s voice faltered, she paused and did not dare to say any more, but she raised her soft eyes to his—they fell beneath the sparkling penetrating, earnest look that was fixed upon her. It was a look that spoke of intense feeling—of love—but there was doubt and perplexity mingled in it—Isabelle could not unravel it.

Again she dared to address him—again, her glance, almost of supplication, met his, but the expression of his countenance was changed, a storm of contending passions seemed to shake his frame, and turning away abruptly, he darted into the thick gloom without, through the window which opened to the ground. Isabelle saw him no more for the rest of the evening, and her pillow was steeped in a torrent of tears that night.

“Alas!” said she, in her midnight meditations, “it is over—all my efforts are useless—

how proud was his countenance this evening, and he flew from me as if he detested my sight!—Would I could blot out from my memory for ever, the remembrance of how dear I was once to him!—of our stolen interviews in Venice! Foolish girl that I was—have I not been bitterly punished for them, and yet I could scarcely refuse to see him, for did he not risk his life to save mine? Ah! then I knew but little what it was to love! Better, far better, if the waters of the Lagune had swallowed me up—it was but cruel kindness to save me—still better, if the devouring flames had destroyed me—Why did he return to Paris?—I was calm and contented—I dreamed not I could love thus—would I could die! And this passion for one who detested me—who said he would prefer banishment—death itself to being united to me—and that in my own hearing, though he knew not I was near. Mad! oh, how mad, to dream I could ever attach him—what have I done to deserve this bitter portion?

—Yet he is unhappy too—so changed—so pale since he came to Paris—Alas! he too must love hopelessly—even now he sleeps not; I hear his perturbed step overhead. Oh death! death! how gladly would I hail thee, as my dearest friend—for then he would be free.”

* * * * *

The next morning at breakfast, Isabelle scarcely dared to meet the eye of De Montfort. She had heard his step until a late hour, hurriedly pacing the apartment, prepared for him, which was immediately over hers, yet when he approached to proffer his morning greeting, she observed that his air, though melancholy, was softened, and that his eye rested on her with an expression almost tender.

It was a beautiful morning, and immediately after breakfast, the various guests, for many from a distance were come to spend a day or two, began to arrange different excursions.

Isabelle sat apart apparently engaged at

some tapestry work. De Montfort approached and said to her: "Isabelle,"—it was the first time he had ever addressed her by her name—"Isabelle you asked me some questions last night about the old place, and our old followers (our! it was music to Isabelle's ear)—would you not like to come over and see it? every one is going out to walk or ride. Let me drive you over in my aunt's little open carriage—you will be pleased to see how beautifully Pierrot keeps the garden and your bower, it is just as when you left it."

De Montfort was standing with his back to the rest of the gay groups who were arranging their plans, and as Isabelle bowed her concurrence, for her heart was too full to speak, he put her hand to his lips and said: "In half an hour I will come for you." He then passed through an open door into the conservatory, close to where she was sitting, and she heard him sigh audibly, yet was she too happy at the time, to ask herself why he sighed.

Unhappy De Montfort! the cup of happiness almost touched his lips; all that he most desired seemed within his grasp, yet a cruel suspicion poisoned the draught, and made him hesitate to grasp what might be but a shadow. Why had Isabelle, after rejecting his letters—after treating him with such scorn and contempt, after he had seen her eyes gloating over the miniature of his rival—of De Cressy; why had she now come into Normandy? why did she now rather seek than fly from him? why was her proud beauty changed into that of the soft, tender, timid woman? Not from the suggestions of her own heart—not because she loved him—No, it could not be, her former behaviour forbade the thought. Friends had interfered—his father, perhaps, his aunt—and she unwillingly, tearfully followed on the path they had chalked out. And he was to take her, a reluctant, weeping bride, to his heart, and know, while he lavished on her the passionate love so long pent up there, that she inwardly brooded over the image of another.

Distraction !—this picture which his fancy had conjured up almost maddened his brain ; the thick darkness, the tangled and dewy paths into which he plunged on the preceding night, had brought no solace to the fever of his mind, and it was not until he had paced his own apartment, long after the old clock in the château had struck the second hour after midnight, that softer imaginings rose before him. He called to mind their ill-starred marriage—he remembered the impression that his coldness—his dislike to it, must have made upon Isabelle. He asked himself if any sacrifice, any humiliation on his part, could be too much to wipe out the recollection of it from her memory.

If she had spurned at his letters, at his love, could he be surprised ? and now that she seemed willing to make a sacrifice of her own natural resentment at his former conduct—looking so beautiful as she did, in her timidity and gentleness, should he reject the reconciliation she appeared to offer, because she could not give

nim all he wished. No, he would not be such a madman, he would try, by his fond devotion, to blot out the past—he would teach her to forget De Cressy, and win her entirely for himself.

Such were some of the motives that made De Montfort seek his beautiful wife this morning, while a rooted conviction of her utter indifference towards him, drew from him the sigh he could not suppress.

Isabelle laid her tapestry work aside with a mingling of joy and trepidation, and hastening to her own apartment for her hood and scarf, soon returned to the salon, where she found only two or three of the gentlemen looking out of the window, waiting for the ladies, who had all disappeared to make similar preparations for their excursions, which had been arranged into two divisions—a walking party over the Côte de Grâce, and along the sea shore, and some of the gentlemen planning to cross over in a boat to Hâvre, for an hour or two.

They all, however, soon re-appeared in the

salon, and seeing Isabelle in her walking dress, made no doubt that she was going to accompany them, and crowding around her, began to explain what a beautiful walk they had planned.

The gentlemen who had been watching the clouds from the window, which had been growing ominously dark for the last ten minutes, notwithstanding the former beauty of the morning, now approached, and pointed out the storm that was coming on. Others of them who had been out, now entered and confirmed the bad tidings, to the great disappointment of all the young people, and soon a thick, steady, heavy rain, began to descend. After watching the heavens for some time, and peeping out of the windows and doors, in hopes of discovering some chance of its clearing, the young girls took off their hoods and scarfs, and dispersing in groups about the salon, betook themselves to various employments, some played at *tric trac*, some sat down to their embroidery frames, while Eulalie and several of the others, throwing open

the heavy folding doors, which connected the salon with the adjoining suit of apartments, sought a refuge from their chagrin in battledoor and shuttle-cock.

Josephine and her friend Adèle Desguey, brought their embroidery frames close to the one at which Isabelle was engaged, just at the moment that De Montfort, who had entered the room a few moments before, was bending over her chair and whispering his regrets at the unpropitious change in the weather.

“But to-morrow, Isabelle,” said he earnestly, “promise me you will accompany me to-morrow—I have much to say to you.”

“I promise,” replied Isabelle, timidly; and the young girls prevented any further conversation by their approach. De Montfort proposed to read aloud for their entertainment, which offer they gladly accepted, and taking up a volume of Corneille’s plays, he commenced the *Cid*.

Thus, with various occupations and amuse-

ments, the morning, in spite of their disappointment, flew rapidly away, the reading only interrupted now and then by the tones of a lute, from the next apartment, or by the flight of some stray shuttle-cock which found its way through the open door, the rain coming down in a steady and uninterrupted pour, when suddenly, a loud knocking was heard at the gate of the court-yard, and the tread of horses' hoofs and the sound of voices outside, gave notice of a new and unexpected addition to their party.

Who this was we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

But, O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts ; suspects, yet strongly loves !

SHAKSPEARE.

THE notes of the lute ceased, the shuttle-cock fell to the ground, and the whole party gathered together in the salon, to see who this new arrival could be. De Montfort had laid his book aside, surprised at the tumult, when the door of the salon opened, and the Marquis de Cressy was announced.

Madame d'Anglures advanced to meet him with unusual animation, and welcomed him to

the château, introducing him to those of her guests with whom he was not previously acquainted. The elder ones were glad to see any new addition to their party on so gloomy a day, while the bright eyes of the young girls shewed that they were not displeased at the entrance of so gay looking a cavalier. To De Montfort alone, although he greeted him with assumed cordiality, the sight of De Cressy was wormwood, and he turned a jealous and scrutinizing glance on Isabelle, as rising from her embroidery frame, she gracefully acknowledged him as an old acquaintance; but his narrowest observation could not discover a trace of that confusion, which the unexpected sight of one beloved, naturally occasions. Had he turned his eyes towards Eulalie, he would have been surprised at the bright carnation that overspread her cheek when the marquis accosted her, but he had no thought, no perception for any one but Isabelle.

After humorously detailing some particulars

of the very wearisome visit he had been paying to his uncle, and his anxiety to fulfil his promise to Madame d'Anglures, and accept the hospitality she had so kindly offered him in Paris, he insisted that he should not interrupt any of their amusements, and declaring that battledoor and shuttlecock was the most appropriate diversion for such dispiriting weather, snatched up a battledoor and challenging the laughing Eulalie to a game, sent the flying shuttlecock across the room with great dexterity. The young people were enchanted at his vivacity — the elder ones praised his good nature, and Eulalie pursued the game with a heart as light and gay as of old, while the marquis paused now and then to look at her fairy little figure, which seemed to fly on gossamer wings, rather than to run across the room.

The jealous De Montfort had abruptly entered the conservatory after his greeting with De Cressy, and heedless of the perfumed flowers and rare exotics which Madame d'Anglures

had assembled there, paced it rapidly up and down, with an absorbed air and downcast eyes. On seeing, however, that De Cressy had joined the party, who had again retreated to the apartment adjoining the salon, and that Isabelle and her companions still pursued their embroidery, he returned, and resumed his lecture ; but his voice was so unequal that he was obliged to plead a sudden attack of head-ache, and desist. —Isabelle's melting dark eyes looked at him as if she would have wished to have bathed his temples, and bound up his brow, but, while her companions sympathisingly expressed their regrets, she did not dare to utter a word, his incomprehensible behaviour on the preceding night, recurring forcibly to her mind.

The announcement of dinner put an end, for a while, to the sports and employments which had cheated time on this day of unceasing rain. The marquis appeared to be entirely engrossed by the pretty Eulalie, and his attentions to her fell like oil upon the chafed spirit of De

Montfort. Was it possible? Had he been mistaken in his suppositions about De Cressy? Were he and Isabelle indeed indifferent to each other?

The young girls had sought the conservatory after dinner, and plucked the blossoms to adorn their hair. Eulalie wove a garland of orange flowers and white jessamine, and twined it through the braids and curls of Isabelle's dark tresses. With her simple white robe, and a white veil carelessly thrown over her shoulders, she looked like a bride, while the subdued and timid expression of her eyes, which fell before the sparkling glance De Montfort threw on her, when he, accompanied by some of the others, entered the conservatory, added to the resemblance.

Evening came, and the walls of the old château, which for several years had never beheld so many visitors, resounded to the tones of the harp and lute, accompanying the voices of the fair maidens.

Isabelle had entreated Josephine not to ask

her to sing. She felt that her voice was unsteady, and that it was impossible she could get through a song—notwithstanding the outward, apparent composure and gentleness of her demeanour, every look, every word of De Montfort filled her with agitation, with vain indefinable fears. She could not reconcile the passionate glances she sometimes caught, with the dark shadow, the dejection that rested on his face when she addressed him—now he seemed to seek her—then to fly from her—Alas ! when would this enigma cease.

But amidst this merry looking party, De Montfort and Isabelle were not the only ones devoured by secret doubt and chagrin. Henri Desguey found means to pour his complaints into the ear of the compassionate Josephine during the course of the evening.

“I had hoped,” said he, “of having some chance with your lovely little sister, now that my hateful rival, Delamare, is out of the way ; but I see it is of no use, she is fascinated with

that volatile, my lord marquis. It is but too plain," continued he, bitterly. "Do you not see it yourself, Josephine?"

"I scarcely know what to say, *Monsieur Henri*," began the gentle Josephine.

"Call me not *Monsieur Henri*," interrupted he impetuously, "kill me not with this coldness—do I not love you as dearly as if you were my sister? Have I any other consolation in the world but in your friendship? Ah! Josephine, let me be simply, Henri, to you. Let me at least converse with you sometimes about her. The ungrateful one flies from me! Tell me, dear Josephine—speak—do you think I have yet a chance?"

"I cannot deceive you, Henri," replied Josephine, turning away with pain, from his imploring look, and so much pity was there mingled with her love in the tender heart of Josephine, that she would willingly, at that moment, if she could, have forwarded his suit with Eulalie.

“If it must be so,” said the young man with a deep sigh, “friendship must console me for love. Come, you must sing to me, dear Josephine,” and he led her to the harp, and Josephine sang sweetly, for her mind, like a smooth untroubled stream, flowing through some green valley, sheltered from the winds of heaven by the high rocks and hills that shut it in, reflected every object in its fairest proportions, and passion, seldom dared to ruffle even the surface of it, with his breath.

After Josephine had finished, Eulalie took the lute, and a group gathered around her. She had sung several songs, in a sweet, simple style, that seemed much to captivate De Cressy, perhaps from her notes being as untaught as those of the blackbird or thrush.

Presently she struck the chords of a wild and rather singular air. De Montfort had been standing at the window looking into the darkness without, and seemingly listening to the rain which fell in a continued torrent ; but

upon hearing this air he started from his reverie, and approaching Eulalie, requested she would sing the words if she knew them.

“Isabelle can sing the words,” said she, “I do not know them, it was from her I learnt the air.”

De Montfort looked at Isabelle and hesitated. He had heard her refuse De Cressy’s pressing solicitations to sing a short time before; but Isabelle immediately arose with a beating heart, took the lute, to sing this song—and for De Montfort!

It was a Bohemian melody, which her old attendant Nina, who was of Bohemian origin, and had spent much of her youth amongst the gipsies, had taught her when she was preparing for her first masquerade.

She saw that De Montfort was intently observing her, and that there was a look of startled surprise in his eyes. She divined the cause of it, and exerting all her powers, war-

bled the wild melody, but her voice, in spite of all her efforts, was low and tremulous.

"I have never heard that song but once," said De Montfort; "and it was at a masquerade at Venice; may I ask where you learned it?"

"From an old attendant," replied Isabelle, hurriedly, "who used to sing it to me when I was a young girl."

"And your voice in its tones has a resemblance to that of her who sung it," continued De Montfort.

"Yes, De Montfort," said De Cressy, who was standing a little apart, "I too remember it now. It was at the Palazzo of the Signor Pesaro at Venice, that we heard it. Does it bring to you memories of another country, and dreams that have passed away? How desperately you were in love then!"

"I loved not then as I love now," said De Montfort, in a whisper so low, that Isabelle, who still lingered over the symphony of the

air, in order to hide her agitation, rather *felt*, than heard the words, which were inaudible to every one else.

Laying the lute aside, she rose from the chair, and feeling almost incapable of moving or breathing, rested her elbow on the back of it for support.

Just then a lively waltz was heard, played on the spinet by Leonore Desguey, and accompanied by her brother on the flute. The young people were immediately in motion, and the marquis approached Eulalie with the intention of claiming her as his partner, but she, coquettishly avoiding him, playfully drew Isabelle forward, and began the waltz with her, while the marquis, although a little disappointed, smiled good humouredly, and led out Josephine. Other couples followed. The dancing commenced in the music room, but some whirled their partners through the folding doors into the salon, which was quite empty. Eulalie was one of those, and she waltzed

round and round the room with the dizzy Isabelle, who was glad of any excitement that could disguise the real agitation she was in. And still Eulalie, an untiring waltzer, whirled her round and round the salon, after all the others had retreated back to the music room, and their steps were so light that their feet scarcely seemed to touch the polished oak over which they flew.

De Montfort leaned against one of the pillars of the folding doors and looked on. His jealous suspicions began to be lulled to rest by the evident fascination which the sprightly Eulalie exercised over De Cressy, and his meditations became of a less sombre cast. Isabelle's voice had often before thrilled through his soul, recalling old associations and memories, but, until now, he never could define the link that united it with the past. Nevertheless not a glimpse of the truth flashed across his mind.

Suddenly Eulalie paused, and exclaimed—

“Isabelle cannot stand, help me,” and she tried to lead her to a seat, but the latter would have fallen to the ground if De Montfort had not sprung forward, and putting his arm round her waist almost carried her to a rustic bench within the conservatory, near the door of which Eulalie had stopped in her waltz.

“Fly for a glass of water Eulalie, she is nearly fainting,” said he, “she will have more air here—you have made her exert herself too much.”

Eulalie was gone, and they were alone in the conservatory, which was dimly lighted up by two or three coloured lamps.

Isabelle, though unable to support herself, had not lost her consciousness—she felt De Montfort press her to his heart and lay her head upon his bosom. How beautiful she looked to him in that dim light!—her glossy hair touched his hand—he dared to kiss her pale lips—he forgot all his unanswered letters—his rejected visits—his fears—his suspicions

he saw nothing, thought of nothing but Isabelle.

“My beloved Isabelle, you are better now, are you not?” said he; “Speak to me.”

She opened her languid eyes, and looked at him, and faintly tried to disengage herself from his arms, but he only pressed her still closer to his heart.

“Isabelle,” said he, “if you knew all I have suffered, if you knew how I love you, you would forgive me, you would try to love me in return, and we might live so happily together in the old Château de Beaumont—speak love—shall it be so?”

She did not speak, but he needed no reply—he read her answer in the soft and tender expression of her countenance, and in the mantling flush that seemed to wrestle with the paleness that still overspread it. He felt her small white hand return the clasp of his—she no longer tried to disengage herself from his arms, and

a bright vision of a happy home rose up before him.

Only a few minutes had elapsed since the departure of Eulalie, yet they understood each other fully—years of felicity were concentrated in those minutes.

He thought he saw the depths of her true woman's heart revealed, in the timid confiding look of her dark eyes, which were half raised to meet his, whilst large tears glittered amidst their long lashes, and he felt that earth and heaven had bestowed upon him their choicest of blessings.

Just then a slight breeze, rushing through the conservatory, covered Isabelle's neck with the leaves of a white rose, which hung overhead, and De Montfort, anxious to shield his treasure from the rude breath of the air, endeavoured to draw her veil closer round her bosom. This movement disturbed the chain which encircled her neck, and the locket, until then concealed within the folds of her robe, fell outside her dress.

It caught De Montfort's eye, and a sudden chill ran through his frame—he started as if he had trodden upon a serpent. O agony supreme ! O fatal sight ! O damning proof ! Too well he knew it again—too well—it was the locket he had seen at the jeweller's, it contained the miniature of De Cressy. He tore himself from Isabelle, and sprung from the seat ; one instant he bent over the locket, “ False one ! traitress ! dissembling woman ! ” he pronounced between his set teeth, and rushing from the conservatory by a door which led into the garden, was lost amidst the thick darkness and pouring rain.

Eulalie had hastened from the salon in search of the water for Isabelle, by an egress communicating with a long passage which connected the pantries and kitchens with the other part of the building, thinking she could procure it sooner by this means, than if she had rung the bell, and the butler had given it to her with all possible dispatch. Nevertheless, though light

of foot as a little fairy, it took her some time to cross the long corridors, and it was not until several minutes after the departure of De Montfort, that she entered the conservatory.

Eulalie almost let the glass of water fall when she beheld Isabelle alone—deadly pale, with a wild look in her large dark eyes, which were open to their fullest extent, and sitting in an upright position, perfectly motionless; “where was De Montfort,” she thought, “and why had he left her thus?”

She made her drink some of the water, and then, with a heavy sigh, Isabelle hid her face upon her shoulder, but at first she did not speak. At length she said in a voice of unnatural calmness, “dear Eulalie, I feel quite overcome, I will go to my room, but do not accompany me.”

Eulalie was too much terrified, however, by her appearance to heed this prohibition, although she had no idea that her illness arose from anything but the over fatigue of waltzing,

and bitterly reproaching herself for having made her dance to such excess, followed Isabelle to her apartment, which, being on the ground floor, was not far from the salon.

Isabelle threw herself upon a couch and closed her eyes, and Eulalie drew a low stool, and sat down at her head.

“I am almost well now,” said Isabelle; “dear Eulalie, leave me—it was only a little faintness, leave me, dear one—you see I am much better, I think I should like to go to sleep.”

Eulalie was very unwilling to leave her, but Isabelle persisted.

“I am quite well dear Eulalie, only a little giddy from all the waltzing—I will lie still for a while, perhaps I may be able to join you by and by; but if not, you will come and bid me good night when you break up. Victorine is in the anti-room, should I feel really indisposed I will call her.”

“Dear Isabelle it was dreadful of me to

whirl you about in such a way, pray forgive me—but I will go since you wish it.”

So saying, Eulalie kissed her, and little suspecting the truth, joined the party in the music room.

CHAPTER X.

Con quai nodi tenaci avvinta a questa
Miserabile spoglia è l'alma mia !
Come resiste a tanti
Insoffribili affanni !

METASTASIO.

ISABELLE could hear the sound of the music and the hum of voices, while pressing both her hands upon her throbbing brow, she recalled the scene in the conservatory, and asked herself over and over again, could it be a reality, or was it only a vision of her disordered imagination ? No, it was not a dream. Had not De

Montfort told her that he loved her?—had he not asked her to forget the past? Then those cruel words—what did they mean? why had he thrown her from him and rushed into the night, heedless of the warring elements?—Cruel De Montfort!—why did he thus torture her?

Thus she lay, exhausted and tearless.—Once or twice, Eulalie stole in to look at her, but she forced a smile—said she was much better, that the sensation of faintness had entirely passed away, and her little friend left her satisfied that it was so.

Thus she lay hopeless and despairing, when she heard the door that led from the garden into a passage at the foot of the staircase open—then she recognised the baron's step slowly ascending the stairs to his room, which was overhead. She heard him pace the apartment for a few minutes—then there was a noise as if he had pulled a table, and then all was silent.

Isabelle still lay motionless and exhausted on her couch. At the end of half an hour, she heard steps descend the staircase, and some one knocked at the door of the anti-room—some one spoke to Victorine—could it be the baron?

The murmur ceased, and all was silent again. Could there be any message? Victorine did not appear.

After some minutes of feverish expectation, Isabelle rose from the couch and entered the anti-room. The *soubrette* was flown, but she found on the table a sealed packet, directed to herself, in the handwriting of the baron. Her trembling fingers could scarcely close upon the letter.

Just at this moment, Victorine entered the room in breathless haste—she had in fact, gone in search of François, to ask him what she was to do with the packet, and meeting him in the passage, he had chided her sharply, for not bringing it with her, and she was now come

back to look for it. She started and turned pale with terror, on beholding it in the possession of the Baroness—what would Monsieur François say to her?

“Why did you not bring me this letter immediately, Victorine,” demanded Isabelle in an unsteady voice.

“I did but wait a little,” replied Victorine humbly, “lest I should disturb my lady—Madoiselle Eulalie said my lady was going to sleep.”

“And the bearer of it?” said Isabelle.

“Was my lord the baron himself,” replied the *soubrette*, not daring to conceal the truth.

Isabelle glided into her own room, and drawing a lamp close beside her, undid the packet with a trembling hand. The letter ran thus:—

“It is time that we should separate for ever, Isabelle. To-morrow I shall leave this neighbourhood—this country, which is become hate-

ful to me, and prepare to return to Constantinople—would I had never left it !

“ I write to you, not to reproach you with the disingenuousness of your late conduct—not to tell you of the misery you have caused me—but to warn you, if possible, of the precipice on which you stand—of the danger in which you are of wrecking both your honour and reputation, and of losing the brilliant position which you at present hold in society—I say nothing of the restraints which religion and virtue ought to have over you—I leave this to the consideration of your own heart. Alas ! I acknowledge that my own former culpable and inexcusable neglect has been the origin of all your faults, but how deeply, how bitterly, have you punished me for it.

“ Need I tell you again, how I cursed my blind infatuation, in favour of another, when I beheld you on my return from abroad—I saw you, beautiful, talented, fascinating, and I became aware of the value of the gem I had

cast from me. I was prepared for coldness, reserve, wounded pride—but I dared to hope that all this might be overcome at last—that my repentance, my sincere acknowledgment of my errors—my love—might have led you to hold out, at least some distant prospect, that I might yet be forgiven, and although I saw you smile upon every one but upon me—although I saw with bitter jealousy, your dark eyes flash with pleasure, when others approached, while from me they were always averted—still I dared to hope. Even when receiving the visits, and congratulations of all your friends, you so cruelly rejected mine, shewing me how unpar-donably you thought I had sinned—I did not entirely despair. But when I beheld to-night, next your heart, the cherished and prized miniature of De Cressy—that locket which I had seen in your hand at the jeweller's—that locket which I well remembered to have been his, I could no longer deceive myself as to the cause of your coldness.

“ Yes, Isabelle, at the very moment that bright visions of domestic peace and a happy home in the old château, with a beloved one, floated before my eyes, I discovered with agony unspeakable that you were irrevocably lost to me. .

“ I would willingly, if I could, set you free, but we cannot break the ties that unite us. All I can do, is to release you from the presence of a man, who, although you have, from what motives I cannot divine, so unworthily stooped to deceive since he came here, must be hateful to your sight,

“ Farewell.”

Was Isabelle in a dream as she read this letter, or had the events of the evening deprived her of her senses? She rose from the couch in wild agitation—she drew the lamp nearer to her. Could it be a delusion of the imagination? No, the paper was tangible—she looked at it again and again—she could not be de-

ceived, it was the handwriting of De Montfort. Yes, he loved her—De Montfort loved her—all would be soon explained—his jealous doubts would disappear, as snow melts before the sun—the miniature worn next her heart would be an irrefragable proof of her truth. His miniature!—yes, he would see she was the Agnes once so beloved.

While these thoughts, quick as lightning, flashed through the mind of Isabelle, she could distinguish De Montfort's voice, as if giving orders to François, and she trembled lest he might leave the château that night—then she hurried across the room to fly to him herself—to tell him all—but no, she could not, she dared not meet his eye, until he was thoroughly undeceived.

Timid and irresolute, she sat down at the table, and snatching up a pen, wrote a few illegible lines, for she had scarcely strength in her fingers to guide it:—

“ You will recognise the locket which I enclose — you will recollect the evening you tied it on my neck in the Church of the Salute.

“ It was not until the jeweller shewed me the secret spring in the one in his possession, that I discovered mine contained your miniature. Ah ! how dearly have I prized it. Judge if I have deceived you,

“ ISABELLE AGNES DE MONTFORT.”

Isabelle took the locket from its chain, pressed it to her lips, and placing it in the letter, sealed it, and went in search of Victorine.

The joy that sparkled in her countenance in spite of her agitation, struck some chord untouched till then in the breast of her attendant.

Victorine, no longer regretted that her mistress had received the letter, and took the one she now gave her, with a secret determination to deliver it faithfully.

“ Give it to the baron himself,” said Isabelle,

“Do not trust it in any other hands, my good Victorine.”

Victorine promised implicit obedience to this command, and hastened on her errand, whilst Isabelle returned to her own room to wait in breathless expectation the result of a disclosure which must at once dissipate the jealous suspicions of De Montfort, and unite her to him for ever.

Victorine would willingly have flown, this time if she could, to the baron's dressing room, where she knew he now was, but midway up the flight of steps, which led to it, she encountered François, who seized the letter in her hand before she could conceal it, and partly by coaxing and partly by threats of never forgiving her, persuaded her to return to her mistress and assure her that she had placed the letter in the baron's own hands.

The girl's attachment to François was so great, and her dread of his not fulfilling his promise of marrying her, so uppermost in her

mind, that she soon consented to be guided by him, and a hint or two, of the little cottage they were one day to occupy in her native village, was quite sufficient to stifle every sentiment of contrition for the treacherous part she had been so long acting towards her indulgent mistress. She therefore returned immediately, and assuring the baroness, that after knocking for some minutes at the door of the baron's dressing room, she had seen him, and given him the letter, retired to wait in the adjoining anti-room, until her farther attendance for the night should be required.

Isabelle sat and watched, breathless and attentive to the slightest sound, but no longer despairing or hopeless. The notes of the distant music fell upon her ear—the rain pattered heavily against the windows—the wind rose and murmured with a melancholy wail through the old trees that surrounded the château—the clock struck eleven—still De

Montfort did not come. "It is impossible, but he must soon come," ejaculated she.

Steps were heard descending the staircase—he comes—no, the steps passed by, they resounded from the passage leading to the garden. The door opened—it closed again—still De Montfort came not. And now her agitation increased, her sense of hearing grew painfully acute—the tread of horses' feet was distinguished amidst the howling of the storm, which muttering low at first, now seemed to shriek around the walls of the château—the great gate of the court yard opened—men and horses passed through it, and now she heard them gallop away—their tread grew fainter, it ceased to echo on her ear. Good Heavens! is it possible that De Montfort is gone—gone without seeing her, and in such a night!

Isabelle sat motionless, pierced with the most poignant grief.

"Alas! De Montfort knows all, and he has left me," said she; "but no, it cannot be him

—he cannot be gone—I will send Victorine to find out—I cannot endure this dreadful suspense.”

She rang the little silver bell that stood upon the table beside her, and Victorine appeared before her mistress, endeavouring to hide her own confusion, for she too had heard the horse-men leaving the court yard, and well knew it must be the baron, as François had told her, that he had been ordered to bring out the horses ; but Isabelle never noticed her embarrassment, being too much pre-occupied with her own fears.

“ Go, Victorine, and bring me word,” said she, “ which of our party has left the château on this stormy night—but now, I heard the noise of horses’ feet, and the gate of the court yard open to let them pass.”

Victorine departed without uttering a word, but soon re-appearing, said that the lord baron De Montfort, recollecting that he had urgent business to transact at his château, which had

escaped his memory until then, had been obliged to return thither, despite the storm and the lateness of the hour. This in fact, being the apology which De Montfort had sent to his aunt, in order to account for his abrupt departure.

“ ’Tis well,” said Isabelle, with feigned calmness, “ I knew not that my lord was going away to-night—leave me, Victorine, I will ring when I want you.”

Isabelle took De Montfort’s letter from her bosom, and read it over and over again.

Alas! she knew not what to think—such assurances of love, mingled with such reproaches—reproaches so undeserved—what visits of his had she ever cruelly rejected? had it not been the dearest wish of her heart to see him?—had she not, after the fire at the theatre, watched for him—looked for him in vain—and this groundless jealousy of the Marquis de Cressy—why came he not when it was all cleared up?—Perhaps he thought her letter too cold, it was

but a hurried scrawl, and then she recalled to mind every word she had written, and wept to think she had not said more, but had she not sent the miniature, and did not that tell every thing?

Madame d'Anglures was much vexed at her nephew's precipitate departure, but although she suspected other reasons, than those he assigned, must have induced him to leave the château at that hour, she was unable to penetrate the true cause. She was disappointed too, and feared that he was harsh and displeased with her, for not informing him beforehand that Isabelle was at the château, and that thus, instead of promoting a reconciliation between them, she might have only made matters worse by bringing them together.

Isabelle was still in her boudoir when Eulalie stole in to say, good night. She was not now lying on the couch as Eulalie had left her, but sitting near a small table, on which was a lamp, with writing materials, her head leaning upon

her hand, and she seemed quite unconscious of Eulalie's approach, until the latter kissed her, and hoped she was better. But she looked so pale, that Eulalie became again frightened, and proposed to sit up with her all night, entreating her to go to bed.

Isabelle, with a faint smile, tried to dissipate her fears, and retiring to her sleeping apartment, which was only separated from the boudoir by folding doors, summoned Victorine to assist at her night toilet, assuring Eulalie that she should be quite well enough in the morning to accompany her in their usual ramble, if the storm that now raged so violently, should pass away by that time.

Various were the contending emotions which kept Isabelle waking all that long night.

She tried to persuade herself that she might see the Baron, or at least, hear from him on the morrow. The morrow came, but it only brought an account of De Montfort's departure with François, from the Château de Beaumont, and

of his having signified to the old steward, that he had no intention of returning thither again.

This last piece of intelligence gave a death blow to all poor Isabelle's hopes. Melancholy and depressed in appearance, and her heart filled with the most poignant anguish, she vainly endeavoured to fathom the mystery that enveloped the Baron's conduct.

She was, however, in a great measure, able to shield her feelings from observation, as, this day, there was a general departure of most of the visitors from the château. The Marquis de Cressy receiving an account of his mother having been taken dangerously ill, was obliged to set off for Paris. He did not, however, leave the Château d'Anglures, without a hurried explanation with the blushing Eulalie, and a promise of speedy return. This, which at another time would have given Isabelle the liveliest joy, although she heard it with satisfaction, had not the power to distract her thoughts from herself, and on seeing the happiness and gaiety it diffused

over all the family party, she secretly reproached herself for the selfishness which prevented her from being a partaker of the general felicity it afforded.

Yet it was grateful to her on many accounts. The Marquis was a *bon parti* for her dear little friend, and his marriage with her would put to flight the jealous suspicions which she sometimes feared must still cloud the mind of De Montfort.

But when she heard that De Montfort had really left France, and knew that rivers and mountains each day were separating them farther and farther from each other, she felt it impossible any longer, to wear the semblance of calmness, and thought a solitude, where she need no longer dissemble, would tend to soften her grief.

Utterly unable to make up her mind to return to Paris, and resume her usual duties at court, Isabelle now determined to resign her situation as *dame du palais* about the Queen,

and shut herself up entirely in the Château de Beaumont. She assigned no reason to her friends, for what appeared to them, to be a very sudden and unlooked for resolution, except that her health required a residence in the country, and after spending a short time longer at the Château d'Anglures, despite the opposition and displeasure of her father-in-law, the Count De Beaumont, at such a step, sent in her resignation to the Queen, and put her resolves into practice.

CHAPTER XI.

Cheerful at morn, he wakes from short repose,
Breathes the keen air, and carols as he goes ;
With patient angle trolls the finny deep,
Or drives his vent'rous ploughshare to the steep ;
Or seeks the den where snow-tracks mark the way,
And drags the struggling savage into day.

GOLDSMITH.

SEVERAL months have elapsed since the occurrence of those events, recorded in the preceding chapter.

Ever since the departure of De Montfort, an insupportable languor had taken possession of Isabelle. Sleep refused to visit her pillow,

or if wearied nature overcome put on the semblance of repose, fearful dreams haunted her, and her slumbers were fevered and unrefreshing. If, for a few hours, she sunk into a happy oblivion, she always awoke in terror with the presentiment of some terrible calamity hanging over her—an icy grasp seemed to chill her heart, as if with iron fingers, and she would watch wearily and anxiously, for the morning light.

The remembrance of the letter she had written to De Montfort, continually haunted her imagination. This letter explaining every thing, pourtraying as it were, in a few words, the hidden spring of all her actions, revealing the secret passion of her soul—thus despised, contemned, unanswered, filled her mind with an ever gnawing, ever consuming canker.

On her first arrival at the Château de Beaumont, her grief was so wild and passionate, that she feared for her own reason—then as she grew calmer, a total indifference to every thing took possession of her soul. The walks she had

loved, the shrubs and flowers she had planted, her books, her music, even the poor peasantry around, in whom she had formerly taken such interest, nothing was able to charm away this soul consuming sorrow.

Eulalie united to the Marquis De Cressy, now resided in Paris, and Josephine was on a visit with her, while Madame d'Anglures, though kind and affectionate, was but little calculated to rouse Isabelle from the melancholy into which she was plunged.

Terrified at last, at the state to which she found herself reduced, and unable to banish those ever recurring memories, Isabelle took the resolution of leaving that part of the country, and seeking repose amidst the scenes of her youth, with the good nuns of the convent of St. Agnes.

Madame d'Anglures, who loved her dearly, and saw with dismay the change that had taken place in her appearance, without being able to divine the cause of it, did not oppose her in-

tention, while the good Abbè de Saye, who visited her frequently, by impressing on her mind the vanity of all earthly pursuits and pleasures, and holding up before her eyes continually, the power of religion to heal the wounded spirit, was principally instrumental in bringing her to this conclusion. He alone, of all her friends, suspected that the real cause of her despondency, was in some way connected with the sudden departure of De Montfort, and though an old man, and one who had long since sought and found in the bosom of the church, a refuge from all earthly cares, he could not forget that he, too, like Isabelle, had once been the sport of contending passions.

“My dear daughter,” said he to her one day, taking her affectionately by the hand, “I do not ask to penetrate your secret ; I have discovered it sufficiently to be satisfied that the step you are going to take will conduce, more than any thing else, to your peace of mind. I

can compassionate you, my child, for I have sorrowed with a deep sorrow for the loss of a beloved one, taken from me under circumstances peculiarly painful. Perhaps you would like to hear my story—it will, at least, distract your thoughts for a while from dwelling upon yourself.”

Isabelle bowed her thanks and acquiescence, for her heart was too full to speak, and the good abbè thus began—

“ You already know that my early profession was that of arms, and that I was not originally intended for the church. I served under Louis XIII. in many battles, and I may now say, with some distinction, being animated by a chivalrous spirit which made me consider honour and glory as the highest of all earthly goods. How fallacious are all the things of this world I have since found.

“ I was an only child. My father, who was himself entirely devoted to worldly pursuits, thought of nothing from the time I was born

but how to advance my fortunes, and with this end in view had early set his heart upon my being united in marriage with the daughter of a neighbouring gentleman, who, though unattractive in appearance and manner, and much older than myself, wanted no grace or adornment in his eyes, as she was heiress to all the possessions of her father.

“Although I sincerely loved and revered my parent, I did not approve of this his favorite project.

“Nevertheless I gave myself but little uneasiness about it. I was seldom at home and then only for a very short period, my military duties engrossing all my time. I was besides, indifferent about love and marriage, glory being the only mistress I coveted—the hour was coming, however, when I was to think otherwise.

“The regiment to which I belonged was ordered to Grenoble, and we expected to remain there for some months. I had never

been in that part of the country before, and wishing to penetrate into some of the Alpine scenery, from which we were at no great distance, asked and obtained, together with a brother officer, three weeks' leave of absence.

“ Determining to be quite to ourselves, we got a country lad to carry our knapsacks, and following the course of the river Isere on foot, took up our abode at the small village of ——, from whence we made various delightful excursions into the vallies, penetrating into the forests, and clambering up the precipices of the neighbouring Alps.

“ We had passed two or three days very agreeably, not taking any guide, but wandering about as inclination led us, when, towards the close of the fourth day, we were caught in one of the violent storms, which so frequently sweep through those Alpine regions. We looked around in every direction for a place of refuge, and soon perceived at no great distance from us a dwelling, nestling under the shelter of a pre-

cipitous rock, and almost hanging over the valley beneath. The spot in which it was situated was wild and secluded, yet the cottage,—for although it appeared large and commodious, it deserved no higher appellation—had an air of comfort, with a tasteful arrangement of the trees and shrubs by which it was almost hidden, that bespoke it the habitation of some one above the rank of a peasant.

“ We were yet hesitating whether we should approach, or seek for a more humble looking dwelling, when we were observed by the owner, who was himself hastening from the valley. He immediately accosted us, and insisted on our accompanying him home, when he welcomed us with primitive hospitality, and intreated us to remain the night. We soon learned that he was a retired officer, a widower, who with his only child, a daughter beautiful as the day, had sought this retreat, which was suited both to his tastes and to his very limited income.

“ Although long past the prime of life, he was

a man of a noble and erect mien and iron-looking frame, his face slightly marked with two or three honourable scars, one, who might still have been supposed fitted to do good service in battle, had he not chosen the hardy life of a mountaineer. We gathered from his conversation, that he amused himself in cultivating a small plot of ground, which he managed entirely himself, with the assistance of an old veteran soldier, who had followed the fortunes of his commander, and who, with one female domestic, constituted his entire establishment. Thus he spent his life in patriarchal simplicity, dividing his time between the labours of his fields and garden and the education of Constance, for so was his lovely daughter named, now in her sixteenth year.

“I had never seen any one so charming as Constance. She united a native grace and gentleness of manner, far beyond the most courtly polish, to a brilliant and transparent beauty that dazzled the beholder. I loved her from the mo-

ment I beheld her. The retirement in which she lived gave an additional charm to attractions which I felt as if I alone of all the world had discovered, and although I knew that my friend was engaged to be married, I was jealous that his eye should have rested upon Constance as well as mine—

“But it signifies little now,” said the old Abbé, with a sigh, “what my Constance then was. Fifty years have passed over my head since that evening which formed a new epoch in my life.

“On hearing my name, our kind host recognised it with an exclamation of pleasure and surprise—‘Can you be a relative of a brother officer and early friend of mine,’ demanded he, ‘who fell fighting by my side, while his first fresh laurels were on his brow?’

“It was of my uncle he spoke, and this old companionship with one of my family, brought on a revival of by-gones and memories, that es-

tablished me immediately on the footing of a friend.

“ We left the house of our hospitable entertainers on the morrow, but I had still more than a fortnight’s leave of absence from my regiment, and in spite of my friend’s advice, who perceived my admiration of Constance, and knew how I was situated with respect to my father, I returned thither again and again.

“ I was always a welcome guest at the cottage of St. Pierre. Partial to his old profession of arms, he loved to talk of the past, and to fight his numerous battles over. He was a man too, who had travelled much and had a great deal of information, and I was never weary of listening to him—but the great attraction was the presence of Constance.

“ My beautiful Constance forsook her bees and flowers when I approached, and drawing a low stool to the feet of her father, betook herself to her embroidery. She spoke but little, it is true, but I observed that her colour heightened

and her eyes sparkled with pleasure whenever I appeared.

“ Nevertheless matters might not have progressed any farther had it not been for the following event.

“ I had been to pay a farewell visit at the cottage. My leave was expired, and I was to accompany my brother officer, who had of late found me the dullest of dull companions, *en route* for Grenoble on the ensuing day. St. Pierre shook my hand cordially and affectionately at parting, and expressed his hopes of seeing me soon again, as he said he understood my regiment was to remain for some time in that part of the country. I was but too glad to promise to revisit him, for I was going away with a heavy heart. Constance was stooping down watering some plants; she averted her face when I approached her, and gave me her hand.

“ ‘ My little Constance,’ said her father, who always treated her, as if she were quite a child,

‘ my little Constance, will you not tell our friend you will be happy to see him again ?’

“ ‘ Yes, very happy indeed, Monsieur,’ replied Constance in a faltering voice, and I perceived there were tears in her eyes.

“ I could not return to my friend that morning, but seeking the depths of the pine forests, thought of Constance until the shades of evening began to gather round.

“ Starting from my reverie at last, I was endeavouring to extricate myself from the intricacies of the wood, when I was struck with the sound of loud voices apparently at a short distance, followed immediately by a report of fire arms. Rushing in the direction from whence the clamour came, I beheld a single man struggling with three ruffians. They had just succeeded in getting possession of his watch and rifling his pockets, and on seeing me, made off with their booty, leaving their victim stretched on the turf, while a stream of blood issued from his side.

“ I raised the unhappy stranger up, and endeavoured to staunch his wounds ; but judge of my horror when I discovered him to be the father of Constance.

“ A shepherd boy approaching, attracted thither like myself by the noise of fire arms, assisted me to form a hurdle and to bear the poor sufferer to his own home, which was only at the distance of half a league from the spot.

“ I pass over the agony of Constance. Aided by the old soldier, I bound up the wounds of my dying friend as well as I could, having sent the shepherd boy to the nearest town for a surgeon.

“ St. Pierre felt he was dying—his only thought seemed to be for Constance—‘ Must I leave my child—my Constance,’ he wildly exclaimed, ‘ who will protect thee when I am gone. O my child, my child, must I leave thee—so young and so helpless !’—‘ My father,’ said I, in choking accents, ‘ let me call you by that name—let me be the protector—the husband of your

Constance—say that it shall be so, and bless your children.’

“The dying man looked at me—a gleam of satisfaction overspread his face, a troubled joy was in his eyes, then they closed, and he remained motionless and insensible for several hours. Towards morning he seemed to revive, but when the surgeon came, he shook his head and said there was no hope.

“The priest of the parish, whom I had likewise sent for, was in readiness to perform the last offices of the church, and now approached the bedside of the sufferer, who appeared to be endeavouring to collect his scattered thoughts, and turned his languid eyes frequently from Constance to me.

“The life of St. Pierre was ebbing apace, but he made a powerful effort on recognising the minister of the gospel, under whom he had dwelt for so many years, and immediately making a faint sign, gave him to understand, that he had some thing to communicate. The

priest bent over the couch of St. Pierre for a few minutes. The latter was evidently imparting to him something relative to myself, for the venerable old man turned his eyes towards me every now and then with an enquiring look—then he approached me and demanded in a low tone, if I had considered of the promise I had made St. Pierre with respect to Constance, and if I was prepared to fulfil it. ‘It would cheer the dying bed of my poor friend,’ continued he, ‘could he see you the husband of his child; nevertheless my son, he is ready to absolve you from a promise made on the impulse of the moment.’

“ ‘My father,’ I replied, ‘the dearest wish of my heart is to replace in some degree to Constance, the loss of such a parent—believe me, for I swear it.’

“ ‘Approach then,’ replied he, ‘and I will perform the rite that makes her yours, while my poor friend has strength to hear it.’

“ He led me to the side of Constance, who,

pale as monumental marble, heard nothing, saw nothing, was unconscious of every thing but her father, and placing her cold hand in mine performed the holy ceremony.

“Never shall I forget the look of happiness that diffused itself over the countenance of St. Pierre. All earthly thoughts were now at rest, and giving up the little that remained of life to heaven, he soon passed away so calmly, that we thought he but slept. The icy coldness of his hand, which was clasped in hers, alone told Constance that all was over, and with a wild shriek she sunk lifeless at his side.

“The good priest led me out of the room, and placing before my eyes, the necessity of joining my regiment that day, as he had gathered from me that my leave was expired, bade me be at rest about the preparations for the funeral, and care of the unhappy orphan, as he would take charge of every thing himself; and without permitting me to see Constance again, hurried me

from the cottage, promising faithfully to write to me on the morrow.

“ I cannot describe the mingled feelings with which I joined my regiment that evening, but grief for the death of St. Pierre far predominated over the rest.

“ Our knowledge of each other had been short, it is true, but we are sometimes drawn together by an invisible link, a sympathy of tastes and sentiments, which unites us more closely than years of acquaintanceship, where no such attraction existed, could have done. It was thus with St. Pierre and myself. From the moment he had heard of my near relation to his early friend and brother in arms, he had looked upon me as a son. Time had not quenched the enthusiastic ardour of his disposition, which responded well to my own, and often when I listened to him, I fancied I saw a Bayard, or a Duguesclin, who having exchanged his sword for a plough-share, had retired from the turmoils of life. But to be brief—

“Some weeks elapsed before I could obtain even a day’s leave of absence. I heard frequently from the good priest, but Constance had not as yet replied to any of my letters. I learned from him that her grief, at first uncontrollable, was gradually becoming less violent, and that she bade him with tears, say every thing that was kind for her to me.

“A short leave of absence was at length granted, and I flew to cheer the spirits of my drooping Constance.

“Our meeting was one of unrepressed sorrow, and our bridal feast was drowned in tears. If, in the weeks I had had for reflection, some doubts of the prudence of my conduct, and fears for the anger of my father, had insinuated themselves into my mind, like the mists of night before the rising sun, they were all dissipated by the presence of Constance.

“I had admired and loved her for her beauty and artless simplicity, but I soon found that these were the least valuable of nature’s gifts,

and that she possessed a noble, lovely, and pure mind, a clear understanding and a sense, beyond her years, together with a warmth of affection, and a devotedness of heart, which were now entirely concentrated upon her husband—she did not seem to have a thought for herself.

CHAPTER XII.

Oft will she rise—with searching glance pursue
Some long-lov'd image vanish'd from her view ;
Dart through the deep recesses of the past,
O'er dusky forms in chains of slumber cast ;
With giant-grasp fling back the folds of night,
And snatch the faithless fugitive to light.

ROGERS.

“ I WAS perfectly open in my communications to Constance. I did not conceal from her my father's projects, and the grief that I knew my marriage would occasion him.

“ She heard me with a deep sigh, and said, ‘ would that the death-bed of my poor lost father could have been made happy at a less .

expense, dear Bertrand, than that of your sacrificing your duty to your own parent.

“ ‘ Ah ! you thought too much of him, too much of me, too little of yourself, but you must not spend all your leave of absence here, you must go to your father, and tell him all without any reservation. An only child is so very dear, he will surely forgive you. Tell him we will only live to make him happy, promise me to go immediately.’ ”

“ I clasped my beautiful monitress to my heart ; I felt the truth of what she said ; I had indeed failed in the duty I owed my father, yet I could not repent the rashness that had made her mine. Upon mature consideration, I determined to follow her advice, my most dutiful proceeding being now to confess my fault, and entreat forgiveness.

“ I was so fortunate as to get my leave of absence prolonged, and so was enabled to spend more time than I had at first anticipated with my Constance. I at length, however,

bade her a reluctant adieu, and hastened to throw myself at the feet of my father.

“On arriving at my father’s château, I found with inexpressible grief, that he had just met with an accident which had caused the rupture of a blood-vessel, and that although in no immediate danger, as the hemorrhage had ceased, he lay in such a state of exhaustion and weakness, that the slightest excitement might bring on a recurrence of the malady which would probably prove fatal. The medical man, who attended him, told me, that, at all events, his recovery would be slow, so that to speak to him on the subject I had so much at heart, during the short period I had to spend with him, would be totally impossible.

“My father received me with unwonted tenderness. Naturally of a reserved and taciturn disposition, although I knew that all his thoughts and hopes were centered in me, he had never, not even in my early youth, lavished on me that prodigality of affection which so

often spoils an only child; but now I found that his languid eye rested on me with an expression of the fondest parental love; that my cares and attentions were preferred before every other, and that he was restless and uncomfortable when I was not beside his couch. I therefore took up my station entirely in his apartment, and attended him with unwearied assiduity.

“ In a few days I had the happiness of seeing my father’s health, slowly, but gradually begin to mend. Judge, however, what were my feelings, when as soon as he had strength to speak upon the subject, I discovered that he had set his heart upon my immediately leaving the army, and expressed a hope that after that, at no distant period, he should see me united to the wife he had chosen for me.

“ It was with difficulty I concealed from my father the contending emotions his wishes and anticipations awakened in my bosom. In his present precarious state of health, I could not

be so cruel as to refuse giving up the service and taking up my abode at home, although I saw that, in so doing, I should divide myself for an indefinite period from my Constance. I dared not now reveal my marriage, but I determined as soon as I could do so without endangering my father's life, no matter what the consequences of his displeasure with respect to my future prospects might be (for I foresaw that his anger would be excessive), to avow to him the union which I had formed without his knowledge ; and should he forgive me, thought I, what a nurse will my Constance make for him, through those years of ill health which I fear are in store for him.

“I was now obliged to return to my regiment as my leave of absence was expired. There were many things to be arranged before I could finally leave Grenoble, and some time must necessarily elapse before my resignation could be sent in and accepted. Under these circumstances, however, I did not find the same dif-

ficulty as before, in getting away for a few days, and very soon after my short sojourn under the paternal roof, I was enabled to repair to my Constance.

“ Her pleasure at seeing me so soon again was damped by the intelligence I brought her of my father’s illness, and the necessity of a postponement of all explanation ; but she quite agreed with me in the view I took of the subject, and proposed that until I could openly declare my marriage, she should remain in her present residence. This cottage and plot of ground which St. Pierre had purchased on his leaving the army, was her own inheritance, and the two old domestics she knew would never forsake her. She would busy herself in country pursuits and try to cheat my absence with her bees and flowers, and wait patiently until I could set every thing to rights.

“ She tried to say all this with sweet uncomplaining cheerfulness, and would, if she could, have hid from me the tears that filled her eyes.

I lingered as long with my Constance as I could find a pretext for doing so, but my resignation was accepted—my father's letters were becoming more and more urgent, and I was forced to bid her a sorrowful adieu.

“ I found my father still weak, and much indisposed. My presence, however, seemed to renovate his sinking spirits, and he was so anxious to have me always in his sight, that I was obliged to spend part of each night in writing those letters which I daily sent my Constance. And now the days and hours crept slowly by—time for me seemed to have loaded his wings with lead, as month after month passed away, and still I saw no prospect of re-visiting my wife, while my father's wishes to see me married to Mademoiselle d'Orville, became every day more urgent.

“ All this irritation of mind, added to my misery, at being absent from Constance, as her period of trial approached, for she was soon to become a mother, had a visible effect upon my

own health. At length, to my great surprise, my father, who had hitherto strenuously opposed my leaving him, even for a day, struck, I suppose, by my loss of appetite and pallor, proposed that I should make an excursion of a few weeks into one of the more remote provinces for change of air, assuring me that he felt himself growing better every day, and adding, that he saw that my health was suffering from my long attendance upon him.

“I know not if the joy that sparkled in my eyes at this proposition, excited any suspicion in the mind of my father. Be that as it may, he parted from me with undiminished kindness, and I flew on the wings of love to seek my solitary Constance—but Constance was no longer solitary—the joyful mother presented to me a boy, beautiful as the pencil of the most imaginative painter could pourtray.

“Five happy weeks glided swiftly by, and were to us both, but as one sweet summer day.

“The letters of my father were cheering—he

spoke of his improved health—no longer alluded to the marriage he had projected for me, and at length summoned me to return home.

“Home! was not my home with my Constance and my boy—the home of my heart?—but alas! I was obliged to leave them; nevertheless, I prepared to go with the fond hope of soon re-visiting them again; for now that my father’s health was so much improved, I determined that my marriage should no longer be a secret to him.

“Winter was beginning to set in at the time of my departure. The trees were almost denuded of their leaves—the streams in the valleys, no longer meandering like silver rills, were many of them overflowed by the mountain torrents, and though as yet early in the season, the cold was severely felt. But to my eyes this wild spot was decked with far lovelier charms than the brightest spring could have bestowed upon it; for did it not contain my dearest earthly treasures?

“I found my father apparently quite convales-

cent. He received me with an affectionate tenderness, that pierced me to the heart, commending my improved appearance, and saying, that the cares and attentions I had lavished on him had, he knew, been detrimental to my health, but that it was entirely to them he owed his present recovery. This paternal reception so softened my heart, that, forgetting the plan I had previously laid out for myself, and the little preparatory measures I had intended to make use of before daring to break my marriage to my father, I precipitately threw myself at his feet, and without any ameliorating circumstances, revealed to him my fault.

“ My father, with evident surprise and much emotion, raised me from the ground, and bade me tell him all the particulars from the beginning. He was much moved at the recital of the death of St. Pierre, who, I afterwards found he had learned from my deceased uncle, had perilled his own life more than once, to save that of his brother.

“ I had prepared myself for a burst of anger and for bitter reproaches, and had hoped that after that, my father’s displeasure might have been softened, but I had never looked for the unqualified forgiveness and paternal love which that kind father now displayed towards me, and I wept like a child as he folded me in his arms.

“ The mention of my boy made his eyes fill with tears, and then sparkle with pleasure, and he asked me a thousand questions about my beautiful Constance.

“ O happy hours ! what blissful anticipations now filled my mind ! years of felicity appeared before me—I saw in imagination, my Constance assisting me to cheer the declining years of my father, and my boy frolicking about his kind grandsire, and climbing on his knees. I remained but a short time at the château, before I again, by my father’s earnest desire, took the road to Grenoble, commissioned by him, O inexpressible transport ! to bring back my wife

and child, while he busied himself in overlooking the alterations and improvements he had already begun to make in the apartments destined for their reception. The old domestics were to remain in the cottage, and we were to keep it as a place for summer excursions.

“The winter was quite set in, but I heeded not the increasing coldness of the atmosphere. My Constance and her babe, hardy plants of Alpine growth, with the precautions I should take, would be but little inconvenienced by a journey, that to the inhabitants of more southern provinces might have appeared formidable. As I approached the vicinity of the Alps, I perceived that there had been a considerable fall of snow—the tall fir trees, white as the ostrich plume, nodded in the blast, the rivulets no longer danced and foamed merrily along, but seemed to creep sluggishly beneath the incumbent weight that oppressed them, and when I arrived at Grenoble, I heard with dismay, that a violent storm had raged the

preceding night, and that in some places, the entrance into the valleys was choked up by the snow which had fallen from the overhanging cliffs.

“ This was not all, there was a rumour abroad that the inhabitants of a small hamlet at the foot of the Alps, had been in imminent danger a few days before, of being buried alive, by an avalanche which had fallen close to them, several of their flocks having been swallowed up, and it was feared that many accidents as yet unknown, must have occurred on the preceding night. Terrified at this information, although it was already late in the day, when I arrived at Grenoble, I set off with all speed for the village of —— where I heard a fearful confirmation of the intelligence. As yet, however, my treasures appeared to be safe, for the accidents alluded to, had not occurred in the vicinity of the spot where lay the cottage of my Constance.

“ It was now dark, but the night, though in-

tensely cold, was calm, far different from the tumult of the preceding one, of whose violence, the prostrate trunks of trees, broken branches, and fragments of rock, scattered about in every direction, gave evidence.

“Although I knew every step of the way perfectly, still I had a guide with lights, to facilitate my progress, anticipating all the time, the wonder and delight of my Constance, at beholding me so soon again. We were now but a short distance from the spot—my heart beat high with joy—every fear had vanished as we proceeded along, and I had recognised one after the other, by the light of the torches, every well known tree and rock standing in its accustomed place, unmoved by the storm and looking as of yore.

“I approached nearer to the dwelling of my Constance—but where are the trees and shrubs with which it was surrounded?—The flambeaux were held on high, but, O my God, do I live to tell it?—the platform on which the cottage

stood, was no longer to be seen—an immense mound of snow alone occupied its place.

“The fatal truth burst upon my mind at once with a conviction, so terrible, so overwhelming, that I stood rooted to the spot, unable to speak or move—memory, consciousness and reason itself forsook me.” (The abbé paused, and covered his face for a moment, while Isabelle, petrified with the tale, clasped her hands and raised her eyes to heaven—at length he continued—)

“Be not surprised, my child—for two years I was the inmate of a mad house ; but insanity to me, was not an oblivion of the past, for amidst all my ravings and delirium, a horrible dread—a consciousness of being the victim of some dire calamity, was always uppermost in my agonized mind.

“At length, reason re-visited my soul, but as memory brought every minute circumstance of the past clearly to my recollection, my overpowering grief, heightened too, by finding that

my kind father was no more, would soon have brought on a return of my malady, had not a new light broke upon my mind, and religion, with all her soothing hopes, balmy influences, and blessed consolations, come to my relief.

“ I now saw my Constance in my nightly dreams, fair as the most beautiful representation which the painters have given of our Madonna. ‘ Bertrand,’ would she say with an angelic smile, as she clasped her baby to her heart—‘ weep not for us, for we are among the blessed, in a region far lovelier than the one we have left—weep not for us, dear Bertrand—think only of the exquisite happiness of being united to us here, in an eternity of love.’

“ And my father—my good, kind father, whose paternal affection I had so long distrusted—I saw him too,—frequently he joined the happy group, and bent over me with an approving smile.

“ Once, before I left that part of the country, I visited the tomb of my Constance. Yes, her

tomb, for cold, and white, and pure as herself, that colossal monument remained impervious to every sunbeam over its unfortunate victims.

“And now, my child, you know my story. I am no longer unhappy, and I wait patiently for my appointed time. I serve my God with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength—I give my goods to the poor—I visit the afflicted, and I humbly hope that my imperfect endeavours may, through faith in my Redeemer, be accepted, and that I shall enjoy an eternal hereafter with the loved ones I have lost.”

Here the good abbé ceased speaking, and Isabelle felt there were afflictions in this world far beyond her own.

And now we must leave Isabelle engaged in making her preparations for returning to the convent of St. Agnes, and see what became of De Montfort after that eventful evening, when, in the midst of the tempest, he departed so abruptly from the Château de Beaumont.

CHAPTER XIII.

But he for paine and lacke of bloude
Was fallen into a swounde,
And there all weltering in his gore,
Lay lifeless on the grounde.

SIR CAULINE.

WE will not attempt to describe the contending passions that raged in the bosom of De Montfort, upon discovering round the neck of Isabelle the identical locket which contained the miniature of De Cressy. It would be impossible to depict the storm that swept through his soul as he rushed out of the conservatory—the more violent for the enchanting

calm which had preceded it just before. It was, as if upon the beautiful Eden of some unknown island in a southern hemisphere, just opening upon the eye of the sick and weary wanderer,

“a mingled mass
Of roaring winds and flames, and rushing floods,”

had at once descended.

Neither will we follow him in his journey to Paris, nor descant upon the hurried farewell he took of his father the Count de Beaumont, and of the grief and disappointment the latter felt at this unlooked-for resolution of his son—neither shall we enter into particulars concerning the chagrin of the valet François, at being prevented by the absence of the Marchioness de Varville from Paris, during the short stay that his master made in that city, from placing in her hands the important packet which he had so nefariously obtained from Victorine, containing the letter and miniature which Isabelle had sent to her husband. All these, together

with an account of the various places De Montfort wandered about in for a couple of months, in a vain endeavour to fly from thought and reflection, we must beg leave to pass over, and will present our hero in company with François, travelling on horseback, late in a fine autumnal day, through an extensive forest in Germany, on his way to visit his old friend Count Herman, at whose castle he purposed spending a short time, before proceeding to join his uncle at Constantinople, this latter place being his ultimate destination.

The evening was just beginning to close in, and the foliage, although tinted with the brightest autumnal hues, still hung so thickly upon the trees as to prevent the eye from piercing through the dense mass, which presented itself on every side. Our travellers were come to a spot where three foot-paths branched off in different directions, and De Montfort, who had been riding on slowly and thoughtfully before his valet for some time, now

paused to consider which of those paths they ought to choose. Looking at his watch, he remarked to François, that he feared they must have deviated from the direct tract since they had entered the forest, as according to the information they had received at the village which they had last passed through, they ought to be at present, at least, a league beyond the forest.

To these remarks François could offer nothing but an assent, the valet in fact was much terrified, having heard at the village where they had slept the preceding night, many tales of the outrages perpetrated by the banditti who roved through the forests, but he did not dare to mention his fears to his master, who had, on more than one occasion, sternly reproved him for his pusillanimity.

That his apprehensions, however, at this time were not groundless, the result proved, for De Montfort had hardly finished deliberating which course he should pursue, when three fierce looking ruffians, well armed, sud-

denly appeared in the horse path he was about to take, and one of them, catching his horse by the bridle, called upon him to surrender, in very intelligible German. De Montfort, instead of complying, replied by firing a pistol at the aggressor, which immediately took effect. The man, letting go the bridle, fell to the ground, and De Montfort, springing from his horse, hastened to the relief of François, whom the other two men had dismounted.

Had no assistance intervened, the combat would soon have been at an end, as De Montfort singly, from his superior skill, was quite a match for the two ruffians, François being unable to take any part in it, as he was lying insensible under the horses' hoofs. But in a few seconds, a dozen more of the banditti, who had been collected together, at a short distance, hearing the report of fire-arms, dashed through the thicket, and one of them from behind, with a thrust of his sword, disabled De Montfort's right arm, while a heavy blow on

his head, from the butt-end of a musket, laid him nearly senseless on the earth.

Stunned and bleeding, De Montfort saw that his last moments were arrived ; he heard the exclamations of the bandits, he perceived the glittering of the swords waving over his head, ready to dispatch him : at this very instant, however, and when all consciousness was nearly gone, a female form interposed between him and the death that hung over him. Hollowly and indistinctly the contending voices fell on his ear, and the name of Welf ! Welf ! he has killed our leader Welf ! he shall die ! uttered with great vociferation, were the last sounds that reached him, for before the sword could descend upon his doomed head, De Montfort had sunk into a death-like swoon.

On recovering from the state of insensibility in which he had lain for several hours, De Montfort found himself in profound darkness.

At first he felt so dizzy and stunned from the heavy blows he had received, that he was

unable to rise from the recumbent posture in which he lay on the damp cold earth, and when returning strength enabled him to change his position, he perceived that his hands and feet were tied with strong cords, and that although he might manage to sit upright, it was impossible for him to stand. Where he was he knew not, but he fancied it must be in some subterranean vault, as he could plainly distinguish the dashing of water against the walls ; and on raising his feeble voice, and shouting as loud as he could, the sound seemed to echo, and reverberate in a thousand different directions—but except the plashing of the water, and the hollow echoes around, no other sound met his ear. Why had they not murdered him, and for what was he reserved ? was he to remain in this dreadful dungeon, without even a drop of water to assuage the burning thirst which the monotonous plashing of the water without, rendered still more excessive ?

And now De Montfort endeavoured to recal

every circumstance of the past fray. He recollected the shining blades that were raised over his head, when overpowered by numbers and stunned by heavy blows he lay prostrate on the ground, and how a female figure had darted forward at the very moment that death seemed inevitable, and interposing herself between him and his opponents, imperiously and haughtily demanded his life. He could recal no more, but who was she? His glazing eye could not at the time distinguish her features, but her voice was not unfamiliar to his ear—why had she saved him from the uplifted sword? not surely to leave him in this dungeon to die.

Several hours—an interminable age they appeared to De Montfort—elapsed while he lay thus, faint and bruised, and consumed by an intolerable thirst. At length a flickering moonbeam made its way into his prison, discovering to him a narrow loop hole in the wall of the dungeon, high above his head. It was

but a faint streak of light, when he first fixed his eye upon it, but gradually the aperture through which it streamed, appeared to enlarge, and he thought he could distinguish the rustling of bushes and brambles that seemed to be broken away with a stealthy hand, and soon he could hear a sound, as if small stones and mortar were being loosened and cautiously removed. And now De Montfort again tried to rise, and to free his limbs from the cords with which he was bound, but all these efforts only served fruitlessly to exhaust the little strength that remained, and he was obliged to wait patiently the result of the endeavours, that he was certain some unknown friend was making to extricate him. After watching with much interest and curiosity for some ten minutes, while the above mentioned work was going on, the sounds ceased, and De Montfort heard a low shrill whistle as if given as a signal—then the light was interrupted for a moment—something passed through the nar-

row aperture, which did not appear of greater dimensions than would admit a squirrel or a fox, and a scrambling of feet was plainly distinguishable down the wall of the dungeon. Presently a body, De Montfort could not tell whether of the canine, feline or human species, reached the ground ; it could not be either of the two former, however, for a flint was struck, a light obtained, and the next instant the slight form of a little dark-looking boy was bending over him. The child, for he could not be more than eight or nine years old at the utmost, made a gesture of wild joy, and clapped his hands triumphantly, then pulling out a clasp knife, set about cutting the cords that bound De Montfort, which he did with much dexterity, all the time uttering exclamations of delight, some in a strange *patois*, some in German, and looking at him with sparkling eyes, that seemed ready to dart out of their deep sockets. The light afforded by the lamp which the boy had placed on the ground be-

side him, was so fitful and indistinct as to prevent De Montfort from immediately recognizing the features of his gipsy visitant, who perceiving it, said to him reproachfully,

“I remembered you the instant I saw you, but you forget me entirely. Zanina greets you by me, and sends you this scroll—but first you must drink some of this brandy and water—Zanina said so;” and so saying, the boy held a small leathern bottle to De Montfort’s lips, who was so much refreshed by it, as to be able to stand upright, and now perceived with unspeakable joy that it was his old acquaintance, the gipsy child, who stood before him.

The paper contained nothing but those few words :

“Fear nothing, but follow the boy, he knows the intricacies of the vaults.”

“I have got the key,” continued Otto, for such was the child’s name, and he pointed to a huge key tied to his waist; “they thought I

was but a child, and they never minded me as I stole after them, when they brought you here, but I heard all they said, you had killed their chieftain Welf, and they swore that in spite of Zanina, if you were not dead before the morning, they would throw you into the smothering hole at the dawn of day—I watched where old Feldek hung up the key of the secret door that opens on the river, and I took it to Zanina,—but the door can be only unlocked on the inside—how were we to get in—Zanina was in despair. The wild cat of the forest cannot climb half so well as I can—I told her of the loop-hole I had discovered the other day, when I clambered after an owl, and so we settled it all.”

Thus chattered the fearless little urchin, in a low voice, as he cautiously led the way along the slimy ground. Suddenly he paused, and raising the lantern on high, called De Montfort’s attention to a deep hole full of green sluggish water, close to which they had to pass.

An immense toad sat upon the edge of it, and seemed to fix its portentous eyes with no friendly glance upon the intruders.

“That is the smothering hole,” said the boy, shuddering, and De Montfort could hardly restrain a shudder too as he looked at it.

“We must throw your cloak on the edge of it,” continued the sharp witted urchin, “and the bandits will be sure you crawled into it in the night ;” so saying, he took De Montfort’s cloak from him and arranged it carefully on the brink of the pit.

The boy was now silent—the sight of the loathsome hole, and the evil spirit that seemed to watch over it, in the shape of the huge toad, had an evident effect in checking his spirits, and he moved so rapidly towards a flight of steps, whose appearance gave hope of a speedy exit from this gloomy dungeon, that De Montfort in his present weak state, could hardly keep up with him. The steps, broken away in many parts, were, with some difficulty, sur-

mounted, and were found to terminate in a low iron door. It required all the strength De Montfort could exert, with the assistance of Otto, to turn the key in the rusty and seldom used lock, but their united exertions succeeded—the door grated on its rusty hinges—it opened, and the night air blew deliciously fresh through the aperture.

Taking out the key, they now proceeded to close the door, which shut with a spring, and forcing their way through the bushes and brambles which concealed it, they stood upon a narrow ledge of rock, on the verge of the river, and on looking upwards, De Montfort perceived that he was directly beneath the huge walls of an old castle, which towered to an immense height above him, and in the dungeons of which he had been immured.

A small boat was lying close to the bank, containing a single female in it, who proved to be Zanina herself. Few words were exchanged, she motioned De Montfort to enter at once,

while the young Otto, who had darted away in order to return the key to the place from whence he had stolen it, was to join them at the distance of about half a mile further down the river, and such speed did the gipsy boy make, that long before they arrived at the spot, he was there waiting for them.

The little boat had glided on with wonderful rapidity, impelled by Zanina's skilful hand.

No sound was emitted by the muffled oars, and the moon having hidden herself behind the clouds, there was not the smallest ray of light to reveal her course. All seemed hushed in the deepest repose, and even the low sobs of the autumnal wind, scarcely broke the stillness of the night. And now Otto jumped in, and still on, on they speeded down the stream, now close to one bank, now veering over to the other, the little Otto steering the boat with a precision that shewed he well knew every eddy and sand bank in the river. Having rowed thus for about two leagues, Zanina at last turned the boat into

a small indentation in the bank, and the young Otto jumping on shore, drew it under a thicket of hazel bushes, where he fastened it securely. Assisting the exhausted De Montfort to leave the boat, Zanina then led him up a narrow and intricate path, which she must have been well acquainted with, to have trodden so securely in the gloom, and paused before a dark mass of rock that seemed to raise an impenetrable barrier before them.

After groping about for a few seconds, Zanina knocked, with a small wand which she carried in her hand, on the face of the rock, uttering at the same time a few words, in a low but clear voice, and presently a door was opened in the side of the cliff, by a female somewhat advanced in years, and the interior of a spacious hut displayed to view, cheerfully lighted up by a large fire of pine wood.

“ You have tarried long, Zanina,” said the person who opened the door, “ I have waited up for you all the night.”

“Excuse me, my dear aunt,” replied Zanina, “I have had much to do, and have much to tell you, but first I must entreat you to provide for the care and entertainment of a wounded friend I have brought with me.”

The female addressed, who though old and withered, was of a gentle aspect, while Zanina was speaking, looked inquiringly and compassionately at De Montfort, as, pale and haggard from loss of blood and exhaustion, he leaned against the rock for support, the light from the wood fire flashing directly upon him; and giving him a cordial welcome, she bade them enter the rustic dwelling without delay.

The door was now closed, securing the inmates from all molestation, for so artfully was it contrived, that the most scrutinizing eye in open day, could discover nothing but a rock covered with brush-wood and lichens.

After a slight refreshment, De Montfort was glad to seek the bed of dry leaves covered with skins, which the young Otto had been sent

to prepare for him in a small room, or rather recess, skreened off from the larger one, by a rough partition formed of branches of trees interlaced with twigs. Here, however, though ill and weary, he was unable to obtain that repose he so much stood in need of, sleep being entirely banished by a few sentences which were uttered by Zanina and her companion in the adjoining apartment.

“You will now be released from your long attendance upon the poor Marchioness Lore-dan,” said Zanina, “for Welf is dead—he fell this day by the hand of the Baron de Montfort, who sleeps yonder.”

“Is Welf indeed dead?” replied her companion, “would it had been sooner—the poor Marchioness died a few days ago in her dismal prison.”

“Poor lady!” said Zanina, “how dreadfully was she punished for her infatuation in marrying Welf!—how came it that he ever permitted you to see her?”

“The monster would never have allowed me to visit her, but that he knew that I was attached to her, and would see she was taken care of, and it was an object to him to keep her alive, as great part of her wealth died with her. Her escape was impossible, as two of his bandits always kept watch day and night at the foot of the tower in which she was imprisoned—death was a release to her, and I did not regret her, but I do now as Welf is gone.

“The beginning of Welf’s cruelty was the separating her from her pretty niece, and preventing any communication with any of her relatives, and to the day of her death the poor Marchioness never could find out what became of her dear *Agnes*, as she used to call *Made-moiselle de ———*” (De Montfort thought he heard the name of Valcour, but no it could not be that name.)

And now the voices became lower, still the conversation was continued, and De Montfort caught a few words here and there—“Isabelle

De Montfort, so beautiful, so good," was murmured by Zanina, and then he heard an exclamation of surprise from her companion. Then broken sentences containing allusions to the night he plunged into the Lagune at Venice,—to the church of the Salute,—and to his bridal with Isabelle, filled his mind with the most exciting and painful curiosity.

How was it that those mysterious people seemed to know the history of his past—his present—his entire existence?

CHAPTER XIV.

But soon within that mirror, huge and high,
Was seen a self emitted light to gleam,
And forms upon its breast the earl 'gan spy,
Cloudy and indistinct, as feverish dream.

WALTER SCOTT.

THE strange conversation which he had overheard between the gipsies, added to his uncertainty about the fate of François, of whom he could obtain no tidings from them, so fevered and irritated the mind of De Montfort, that the dawn of day, as it peeped through a window, artfully constructed in a crevice of the rock, still

found him watching. His wounds and bruises were more painful than when he had lain down, and he was so weak as to be unable to rise from his leafy couch.

The young Otto, who had crept in soon after sunrise to look at him, and see if he was asleep, ran to tell his mother that he was sure their guest was worse.

Zanina now summoned the elder gipsy who was a skilful leech, to examine the bruises of De Montfort, which Nina, for she was no other than our old acquaintance who had the charge of Isabelle at Venice, did with great gentleness and dexterity.

Her first care was to look at the wound in his arm, which she pronounced to be but slight, and then, after applying to that and his other bruises the cooling leaves of a healing plant, which she had gathered in the woods, she administered to him a soothing potion, and bade Otto bring her word when he slept.

During the short time that the gipsy was ad-

ministering to him those medicaments, she made use of so many ceremonies and mystical words that De Montfort, despite the weak state he was in, at first resisted their application, declaring that he was a Christian and a knight, and would have nothing to say to their heathenish devilries; but to this Nina mildly replied, that, though a gipsy by birth, she had spent the greater part of her life domesticated in a noble family at Venice, and had often frequented Christian churches, as she would prove to him by and by. Pacified by this assertion, De Montfort made no farther opposition to her treatment, and a slumber so profound and refreshing followed, that towards evening he was enabled to leave the apartment allotted to him, and join the gipsy party assembled round the bright wood fire, which sparkled and crackled in one corner of the hut. He was, however, still weak, and reclined upon a low cushion, which the little Otto had carefully arranged for him in the warmest part of the room.

De Montfort now learned from Zanina that she had, some short time since been, to attend the death bed of the old man her father, and was now on her way to Vienna with her little son Otto, where she purposed to remain for some months—that about a week ago, one of her companions, with whom she journeyed, had been taken so ill, that they were obliged to halt in the forest, and so had accidentally fallen in with the bandits.

This mention of the bandits suddenly aroused the attention of Otto, who, after he had arranged the cushions for De Montfort, had retired into a distant corner, and appeared to be busily engaged in some occupation of his own, and he exclaimed,—

“Mother, I have been up the river to day in the boat, and I have seen Feldek.”

“You have seen Feldek have you?” said Zanina with some uneasiness. “Has he spoken to you of the Baron de Montfort’s escape from the dungeon?”

"No, mother," said the boy exultingly, "he dreams not of it. He bade me tell you, that their prisoner, for whom you were so much interested, in groping about the vault, must have fallen into the smothering hole, as they had found his cloak lying on the edge of it, and that they had thrown the body of his valet after him to keep him company."

"Dreadful!" said De Montfort, shuddering, who thus saw his worst fears realized with respect to the unfortunate François.

The silence that ensued was interrupted by Otto, who still remained intent upon his work at the extremity of the apartment.

"I pray thee, good aunt Nina, lend me your scissors," said he, "I want to rip open a seam."

"What hast thou got there, child?" replied Nina, "where is thy knife, canst thou not cut it?"

"It is a goodly doublet," returned the boy, "which I found in the forest this afternoon. I like not to mar it with a knife."

Nina upon this took the scissors from her girdle, and gave them to the child, who continued silently at his employment.

All this time De Montfort reclined upon the cushion, his eyes fixed upon the fire, as if watching the dancing of the quivering flame, his thoughts now recurring to poor François, and then wandering to the conversation he had overheard the preceding night between the gipsies.

"You have resided in Venice, have you not?" he at length abruptly said, addressing the elder gipsy.

Zanina turned a piercing look on him, and her companion replied in the affirmative.

"I once spent some weeks there," continued De Montfort, "it was at the time of the carnival in the year ——"

"I remember it well," replied Nina, "I was living in Venice at that time myself."

"It is not probable we ever met before now," rejoined De Montfort, "and yet I know not

why, but there seems some mysterious link between you and me which I cannot fathom."

"I was at thy side the night thou didst entreat for the little cross, from one whom thou hast since forgotten," replied Nina.

"What," exclaimed De Montfort with much surprise, "didst thou accompany the beautiful Agnes to the Church of the Salute?"

"Even so," replied the gipsy, "I was then her attendant; but had I known the false heart that was proffered to her, she should never have accepted it."

"I was but a few days absent from Venice," rejoined De Montfort, "and on my return I sought for her every where in vain, she was gone, and I could gain no tidings of her, nor of any of her kindred."

"And when thou didst find her," interrupted Zanina, "and she became thy wife, didst thou prize the treasure that was bestowed upon thee?—if thou didst, wherefore art thou now on thy way to Constantinople?—why hast thou left thy

beautiful Isabelle, or Agnes if thou likest better so to call her, to weep and lament her sad fate in solitude?"

"I understand you not—I know not who you mean," exclaimed the astonished De Montfort. "What connexion can there be between the young Agnes I wooed in the church of the Salute, and the bride whose unwilling hand Louis the Fourteenth bestowed upon me?"

"Isabelle de Valcour was the name of the young maiden for whom thou periledst thy life in the Lagune at Venice," replied Nina; "her second baptismal appellation was Agnes, and it was a fancy of the poor Marchioness Loredan to call her always by that name."

"It is impossible—it cannot be," said De Montfort with increasing agitation; but at the very moment he spoke, the recollection of the gipsy song which Isabelle had sung at the château d'Anglures, and her subsequent fainting, flashed across his mind, and he paused—then he added—

"But what avails it now to me, to know

this, if it be indeed true—Isabelle loves me not—her heart is given to another.”

“Believe him not, good aunt,” interrupted Zanina; “such is not the case, the baron deceives thee, or he is himself misled by false appearances; even now, Isabelle weeps his absence, and her thoughts are occupied with him alone. But thou shalt be convinced, despite thyself,” continued Zanina, turning towards De Montfort, and rising from her seat, she suddenly placed before his startled eyes, a small pocket mirror, on which the flame of the blazing logs of pine wood, throwing a dazzling light, revealed to his astonished gaze the lovely form of Isabelle, arrayed in the sombre garments of a nun, with the white veil betokening her noviciate, falling over her shoulders.

The cell, for it was none other than a cell in the convent of St. Agnes, chilled the eye with its dark, cold walls, and contained no furniture, but a small sleeping couch with a single table and chair.

Isabelle was sitting at the table—she had apparently been engaged in painting, from the materials that lay before her, and was at this moment intently examining a picture, nearly finished, which she held in her hand. So vividly was this scene portrayed, that De Montfort saw at a glance, it was a miniature likeness of himself, on which her pencil had been employed, and even while he looked, a large tear rolled down Isabelle's cheek and fell upon the ivory.

Fascinated by the objects before him—transfixed and motionless, De Montfort at first scarcely breathed, then he started as if from a dream, and pushing away the mirror, exclaimed,

“Delude me not with this vision—enchancing as it may be, it is but the effect of thy unholy arts and incantations.”

“Stigmatize not so harshly,” replied Zanina, proudly, and removing the mirror from before his sight, while she spoke, “condemn not thus,

the secrets which have been handed down to us, wanderers upon the earth, from the most learned of mankind, our ancestors the Egyptians. If to them, as we have indubitable proof of it, were revealed the mysteries of the stars and a knowledge of the occult sciences, and of various secrets long lost to the succeeding generations of men, wonder not, if some small remnants of their ancient skill still linger among a few favoured ones of us, their descendants, and if ——” here Zanina was interrupted by the young Otto, who sprung forward, holding up a glittering trinket, with childish glee, and exclaiming—

“ Mother ! mother ! look at this beautiful little golden ornament, you must hang it to the chain you have put away for me, until I am a grown man.”

“ What is this ?—where didst thou find it ?” said Zanina, taking a small locket from the boy’s hand, and holding it towards the light of the fire. It caught De Montfort’s eye, and

with an exclamation of surprise, he requested Zanina to allow him to look at it, which she immediately did.

“ Good Heavens ! where can this have come from ? ” said De Montfort, as pressing the spring, the locket flew open, and disclosed to him the miniature of himself, which had been painted at Venice, and which proved it to be the identical locket he had with his own hands, tied round the neck of Agnes in the Church of the Salute.

“ It was in a letter, ” said the boy, looking half frightened at the emotion De Montfort displayed, and as if he feared he had some how or other done wrong, — “ it was in a letter, sewed up in the lining of a doublet, I found this morning in the forest—the pockets were all empty—I felt something in the bosom of it, and I opened the seams and got this out. ”

“ And the letter—where is it ? ” said De Montfort, eagerly.

“ I have not torn it, ” said the boy, going to

the corner and gathering up the papers which he had thrown upon the floor, "I did but take this trinket out of it."

De Montfort could scarcely believe his senses when Otto placed in his hands the few almost illegible lines which Isabelle had sent him on that eventful night, when almost mad with rage and jealousy, he had so suddenly left the Château d'Anglures. Those lines, so simple yet so touching, combined with the miniature which he held in his hand, at once extracted the poisoned arrow from his heart, which had so long rankled there—but while a flood of happiness burst upon his, until now, tortured mind, at thus having Isabelle's love and truth displayed clear as the sun at noonday, his joy was soon damped on considering what must be her feelings at his apparently inexplicable conduct. And this letter—this precious letter—why had François so basely secreted it from him?—what plot against his peace and that of Isabelle, could this menial have been engaged in?

Those thoughts quick as lightning passed through the mind of De Montfort, while his gipsy friends sat by, looking on him with curious eyes. At length he took up a crumpled envelope, which the young Otto had likewise placed before him, and saw with inexpressible surprise, it was directed to the Marchioness de Varville, while a scrawl on the inside, in the well known handwriting of his valet, gave him, at once a clew to unravel the mystery in which the transaction was enveloped. It ran thus—

“ My lady and honoured mistress, I send you enclosed in this, the last letter which has passed between the Baron and Baroness De Montfort. One only of the baron’s letters has escaped my vigilance, and that through the carelessness of Victorine—the packet I enclose is the answer to it. All the others have been heretofore faithfully intercepted,

“ Your trusty servant,

“ FRANÇOIS.”

De Montfort had no sooner read this letter, than he had a clear perception of the efforts the Marchioness de Varville had made, assisted by the treachery of François and Victorine, to prevent all correspondence between him and Isabelle; and he now plainly saw that he and his innocent wife had been the victims of the revengeful plots of a slighted woman. He was satisfied that no line of his, except the last letter, to which François alluded, had ever reached Isabelle, and that she had been, until then, perfectly unconscious of the state of his feelings towards her, and when he thought of the artless efforts she had made at the Château d'Anglures, to soften what she must have considered his flinty heart, and the unmistakeable pleasure she shewed, when, in spite of his doubts and suspicions, he had in a degree yielded to the fascination of her beauty and sweetness, he was almost beside himself with rage and indignation at the deceit that had been practised on him, and would willingly, if he

could at the moment, have annihilated the perfidious Clementine and her agents.

A few words explained to the gipsies the treacherous conduct of François and the consequences resulting from it. It was then arranged, that on the morrow, should the baron's strength permit him to do so, they should all proceed to the nearest village, where De Montfort could procure a horse and such attendants as he thought fit, and from thence retrace his steps with all possible speed. At the same time, Zanina informed him, that Count Herman and his lady, at whose castle he might otherwise have been supplied with every thing he wanted, as they were only a few leagues distant from it, were absent, having been spending some months at the court of Vienna.

That night too, like the preceding one, was a sleepless night for De Montfort.

The glimpse which Zanina had given him of Isabelle, in the habit of a nun, filled his mind with new terrors, and he feared, lest before he

could reach her, she might have consummated the sacrifice which her garb and place of abode plainly indicated she had in contemplation.

On the morrow, notwithstanding many remonstrances from Zanina on the score of his health, for he still looked ill and weak, De Montfort departed from Nina's rude habitation, and took the road to the village of ——.

At Vienna, the baron had an interview of a few hours with his friend Count Herman and the beautiful Una, and from them he learned, that Ivan Michaelis had espoused the fair Anastasia, and was just at that period enjoying a short respite, in his native village, from the fatigues of war.

Leaving De Montfort journeying on the wings of love towards France, we must now look back a little, and see how fares it with the melancholy Isabelle in the convent of St. Agnes.

CHAPTER XV.

How happy is the blameless Vestal's lot !
The world forgetting, by the world forgot :
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind !
Each prayer accepted, and each wish resign'd :
Labour and rest, that equal periods keep ;
Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep ;
Desires compos'd, affections ever ev'n ;
Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heav'n.

POPE.

ISABELLE returned to those beautiful scenes she had once loved so dearly—she saw again the good nuns who welcomed her with unfeigned pleasure. Again she visited the poor peasantry whose children she had so often taught—a simple and primitive people, one of whom would not have exchanged, for the most favoured and luxuriant spot upon the earth,

his rock, his cabin, and the torrent which dashed beside it—yet his life was a laborious life—frequently he might be seen, cultivating the precipitous side of his little field, while a rope attached to his waist, and fastened round the trunk of some tree, prevented him from being hurled down the perpendicular declivity. Again she traced the windings of the Gave, and sought out every deep ravine, and wooded height and mossy grot, the favourite haunts of her childhood and girlhood, but though as bright as ever sparkled the waters of the Gave, as fair bloomed the wild flowers, and as sweet smelt the health, though the birds sung as gaily and the sheep bells tinkled, and the wild bees flew from bud to blossom as of yore, no spring of happiness seemed to awaken in the blighted heart of Isabelle.

Wearily, wearily passed her hours, and vain were her endeavours to banish the image of De Montfort from her mind. So vividly, so clearly was it engraven there, that a miniature she painted of him from memory, was as faithful a

likeness as any that could have been taken by the most celebrated painter of the day. Yet when her work was completed, and she had fastened it to the chain which formerly held the locket, she felt that it was not thus the good Abbé de Saye would have recommended her to employ her time, and she tried by a closer attention to her religious duties, and by more sedulously visiting and instructing the poor, to rouse herself from that depressing torpor of the spirits, unvaried by a single hope or fear, which had of late taken possession of her faculties.

The kind hearted nuns looked on the altered appearance of Isabelle with much anxiety, so different from what she used to be when under their instruction and care, while the abbess, not the same gentle being whom Isabelle had formerly known there, but a nun from a neighbouring convent, of high rank and of austere aspect, newly promoted to that dignity, inwardly rejoiced in the hope that this new in-

mate of the convent might shortly be placed under her imperious sway, by becoming one of the professed sisterhood.

Neither was this hope of the lady abbess without good foundation, for Isabelle, feeling so miserable in herself, and seeing the nuns around her looking so calm and contented, with no care or concern to all appearance but for her, soon began to think, that once enrolled among their numbers, she too might enjoy the peace which was their portion. She had already assimilated herself so far to their position, as to have assumed the dress of a nun ; and now this idea of taking the vows, having once presented itself to her mind, she determined to lose no time in putting her intentions into practice, and having consulted the lady abbess, who heard her with undisguised joy, on the possibility of shortening the probation of a novice, it was finally arranged that the abbess should write to her kinsman, the Cardinal G——, then at the court of Rome, to

obtain from the pope a permission for Isabelle to take the vows at once, without her being obliged to submit to the delay of wearing the white veil for a year.


A letter from the cardinal was soon received by the abbess, enclosing the consent of the Pope to the prayer of the Baroness de Montfort. It brought besides the gratifying intelligence to the proud abbess, that as her kinsman the cardinal, was shortly to proceed to Paris on a mission from the court of Rome, he would take this opportunity to make a detour, and visit the convent of St. Agnes, and would thus be enabled himself, to be present and to assist at the holy ceremony.

The abbess was internally wild with joy on receiving this letter, and had great difficulty in suppressing all outward demonstrations of how grateful to her proud and haughty spirit, was the additional pomp and importance the presence of a cardinal would give to her convent on such an occasion, while Isabelle meekly

prepared herself, by the strict seclusion and additional prayers and vigils which the abbess imposed on her, to fit herself for the solemn vow she was about to take.

At length the day arrived, to which Isabelle had latterly directed all her thoughts and meditations, nor had she done so without success—the contemplation of it had begun to pour balm into her lacerated heart, worldly things were fading fast from her mind, the last link between her and earth would soon be broken. Even the image of De Montfort, when his image did intrude upon her, came surrounded by softened and more soothing reflections. Perhaps when her sacrifice was completed, and she was irrevocably divided from him upon earth, thoughts of their youthful love, and of the unkindness with which he had treated her, might rise before him, and memories of her, divested of every thing harsh that now grated upon his mind, sad and soft as the plaintive sighing of the night winds, or as the notes of a song once

loved and then forgotten, might steal across him even in his brightest hour.

The day, as we have said before, was arrived, and yet it could hardly be called the day, for the hour fixed upon by the lady abbess for the ceremony, in order to render it the more imposing, was the grey dawn of the twilight, when the shades of night are beginning to disperse.  Already the solemn sound of the organ was heard mingling with the voices of the choral nuns. The altar was blazing with waxen lights, but the body of the church was but dimly illuminated, the lamps, scattered in various parts, only serving partially to reveal the long aisles of this ancient edifice, and to glance here and there upon the figures of the numerous spectators who were assembled on the occasion, the abbess having taken care it should be known for many leagues round, that a cardinal and a bishop were to assist in her convent at the profession of a novice of high rank.

The monks of a neighbouring abbey were ranged in the upper nave of the church, while the young novices, many of them dazzled with the pomp and splendour they beheld, and hoping one day themselves to be principal actors in so exciting a scene, arrayed in white with chaplets of fresh flowers round their heads, and forming a striking contrast to the subdued air and sober garb of the professed nuns,—scattered myrtles before the group, who slowly moved up the centre aisle on their way to the altar.

The most conspicuous person in this group was Isabelle. She was supported on one side by the cardinal, and attended by several priests. Pale and composed, with her dark eyes fixed upon the ground, and a something that was not of earth in her whole appearance, she wore not now the simple garb which she had adopted since her entrance into the convent, but according to the custom of those days, which demanded that the novice should for the last time in her life, appear surrounded by that worldly splen-

dour which she was about to abjure, her robe of the finest silk fell in rich folds to the ground, and the garland which bound her hair was formed of strings of pearls. And now the golden censers, filled with odorous perfumes were tossed on high,—the organ swelled with a louder and more solemn peal, and then seemed, for an instant, to die away in plaintive sounds, amidst the reverberating echoes of the long aisles of the church. The group, upon whom all eyes were fixed, had arrived in front of the altar, and Isabelle took her place on the right hand beside the lord cardinal, while three priests ascended the altar and commenced the celebration of the mass.

When the first mass was concluded, the bishop pronounced an eloquent discourse, setting forth the happiness and purity of the conventual life, and the freedom from all earthly cares that was the portion of those who embraced it.

The bishop ceased, and now the time was come for Isabelle to pronounce the fatal vow

that was to sever her from all earthly objects. A white serge dress was thrown over her by the hands of the lady abbess, and the pearls and braids being removed from her brow by one of the nuns, her thick hair fell in clustering ringlets over her shoulders, forming a veil as ample as the symbolical black one that was now to replace them. Already the fatal scissors were raised to sever those luxuriant tresses, when a man, who had been rapidly making his way through the crowd, arrived in breathless haste before the altar, and seizing the hand of the nun, who was about to cut off Isabelle's hair, peremptorily forbade the ceremony to proceed.

The cardinal, the bishop, the priests, the lady abbess, the nuns, the spectators, were all thunderstruck and aghast, at this daring and unheard of act.

The ceremony was completely interrupted. Isabelle, who immediately recognised De Montfort, fainted on hearing the sound of his voice. Holy water, which stood in a large vase close

at hand, was sprinkled on her by the nuns who crowded round her, but to no purpose—all was confusion and dismay. At a sign from the cardinal, for the abbess was at first too much petrified to move, Isabelle was conveyed through a grated door not far from the altar, into a sort of cell or passage room communicating with the convent. Thither the cardinal, the lady abbess, and a few of the nuns followed, and De Montford, notwithstanding the efforts of the priests to restrain him, forced his way in likewise.

“This is sacrilege,” exclaimed the abbess, in a haughty voice; “this interruption must not be—it is of her own wish and free will that sister Agnes is about to take the vows—the pope himself has consented to shorten her noviciate, no intreaties can make a novice retract at such a moment.”

Isabelle, who had been placed upon a bench, after a second application of water, which was plentifully sprinkled upon her, began to revive,

but she trembled so violently, that sister Marie, a kind hearted nun, and one of her ancient friends, could scarcely support her.

“Collect yourself—summon up all your energies,” whispered the good nun; “you will be called upon to act, to decide for yourself shortly.”

Isabelle with a startled terrified air, looked around, and her eye fell upon De Montfort, who, pale and exhausted from rapid travelling and agitation, and not yet fully recovered from the wounds he had received, seemed nearly in as bad a plight as herself. He made an effort to approach her, but the indignant abbess stepped between them and demanded of him, by what right he had dared to interrupt so solemn a ceremony.

“By that of a husband,” replied De Montfort with firmness; “the ceremony shall proceed no further, until I have had five minutes conversation with the Baroness, my wife.”

“It shall proceed now,” exclaimed the en-

raged abbess, and seizing Isabelle by her hair, she would with her own hands have severed it from her head, had not the cardinal interposed.

“My good cousin,” said he to the abbess, “believe me I sympathize in your just indignation, but this cannot be, we must not use force, all will be presently arranged to your satisfaction—sister Agnes is about to take the vows of her own choice—is she not?—no undue influence, you say, has been used.”

“Speak, my child,” added he, in a bland and gentle tone, addressing Isabelle; “is it not of your own free will, that you make your profession?”

Isabelle faintly inclined her head in answer to this question.

“Isabelle!” exclaimed De Montfort, in much agitation; “I ask but for five minutes conversation—you shall then be free to choose. No! you cannot refuse me this last request.”

“It is impossible—it would be profanation

for sister Agnes to listen to you—she is more than half professed already,” retorted the enraged abbess—“the ceremony must proceed.”

De Montfort threw an imploring glance at the cardinal.

“My daughter,” said the cardinal, in a low voice, to the excited abbess, “we had better consent to the solicitation of the Baron de Montfort”—then in a louder tone, taking out his watch he said, with much solemnity: “We allow sister Agnes five minutes to decide—we rely on her piety and true vocation, and are satisfied that no persuasions of the Baron de Montfort can now induce her to retract.”

The cardinal motioned those around him to retire into the church, and Isabelle and De Montfort were alone. They were both silent for an instant, Isabelle, like one who on the point of falling into a gentle slumber, lulled by soft sounds and fair visions, is on a sudden rudely torn from the Elysium into which she was about to sink, still looked startled and be-

wildered ;—the agony she had endured, on that last evening in which she had seen De Montfort, flashed full upon her recollection, and she felt, should she again have to undergo such torture, she could not outlive it—yet she did not withdraw from him, the passive hand which he had taken in his, while De Montfort intuitively reading her thoughts, saw that the happiness of his life was set upon a single cast.

“Isabelle !” said he, in a faltering voice, and taking the packet from his bosom with an unsteady hand—“this letter with the miniature, which, had I received it, would have explained every thing, and brought me to your feet, by the treachery of François, was basely suppressed, and it was only a few weeks ago, on his death, that it accidentally fell into my hands—yes, Isabelle, had I received it when you sent it to me, we should be both now united and happy in the old Château de Beaumont ;—speak dearest, best beloved !” and he clasped her hand in both of his, and pressed it to his heart. “Speak

Isabelle, will you kill your husband by a perseverance in thus assuming the veil?"

"De Montfort!" said Isabelle, and a shower of tears fell from her before tearless eyes.

De Montfort saw he had prevailed, but there was no time to speak, for at this moment the cardinal appeared within the door-way, and perceiving at a glance, that Isabelle had been won over, quickly approached.

"My daughter," said he, looking at Isabelle, compassionately, "I see it is as I feared it would be."

"Forgive me, father," she replied deprecatingly, "if I submit myself to the wishes of my husband."

"You must then leave the convent immediately," returned the cardinal, "for the abbess, the bishop, the priests, will be all in arms against you, you must depart by yon private passage on the instant."

The cardinal paused, and, looking round, saw the black garments of a nun, as she stood close

to the door which he had left a little ajar—he caught her eye and beckoned her to approach. It was the kind hearted sister Marie.

“Conduct the Baron and Baroness de Montfort,” said the cardinal, addressing her, “with all speed through the passages which lead from this cell into the convent court — my equipage waits for me there—give this ring to the coachman as a token,” and as he spoke, he took a massive gold ring from his finger, “and tell him it is my command that he should convey the Baron and Baroness de Montfort, without delay, to the town of Lourdes,” then turning to Isabelle, he continued :

“My daughter, your resolution is a rash one, but go in peace, I pray God you may not repent it.”

Hardly giving De Montfort and Isabelle time to utter a word of thanks, the cardinal now hurried them through the door, which he shut and locked after them, and returning into the church, ordered the second mass to proceed,

informing the astonished abbess, that when this was concluded he would explain every thing to her.

A wintry sun was beginning to struggle through the clouds which still hung upon the horizon, when De Montfort and Isabelle followed sister Marie into the passage, and a few faint rays peering through the narrow windows, which even in a bright summer's day, afforded but a scanty light, just served to shew them the figure of the nun flitting rapidly before them. Isabelle did not speak, but she clung to De Montfort convulsively, as if she feared to be torn from his grasp, while he tried, by a whispered word or two, to soothe her agitation as he supported or rather carried her along the narrow passages.

At length, the nun paused to open the door, which would admit them into the court, and De Montfort took this opportunity to remove the capacious horseman's cloak which he wore, and enveloping Isabelle in it, contrived to screen

her disordered hair, and nun-like habit from all observation.

They were now in the court of the convent. The cardinal's carriage was in waiting—De Montfort placed Isabelle in it, and springing after her himself, the coachman, true to the orders which sister Marie had just imparted to him, lost no time in pursuing the road to the town of Lourdes.

Soon, the morning assumed a brighter aspect—the sun burst forth more cheerily—the road wound along the banks of the romantic Gave, and though no smiling verdure now decorated its banks, yet the trees which bent over its mirror-like waters, sparkled with congealed crystal drops, like shrubs of fairy-land hung with diamonds and pearls.

The mountain summits displaying the most varied and picturesque forms, were clearly defined against the azure of the heavens. The ancient abbey of St. Savin, and the Château de Beaucens, were full in sight, and many a

strong tower, looking down from the pinnacle of some steep rock, formed a security to those beautiful valleys against the incursions of the wild inhabitants who dwelt in the fastnesses of the Spanish Pyrenees. But our travellers saw little of all these surrounding objects—De Montfort's eyes were fixed upon his timid trembling Isabelle, who, like the startled cushat dove, could as yet scarcely believe herself in safety, and ——— but it is now time we should come to a conclusion.

CONCLUSION.

WE will not dwell upon the explanations which ensued, or upon the vows that De Montfort made, and the tears of happiness that Isabelle shed. We have now brought our story to a close, and little more remains to be told.

The bells in the village of —— rang out a merry peal on the day that the Baron and Baroness de Montfort took up their residence in the old Château de Beaumont.

It was now the season of the Christmas, and New Year festivities, and the tables in the

ancient baronial hall groaned, again and again, with the weight of the feast that was spread upon them.

Joy seemed to fill up the furrows on the faces of the old servitors, and although it was winter, Pierrot the gardener managed to have a bouquet of fresh flowers to present to his beloved mistress.

The Count de Beaumont, gratified at last in the dearest wish of his heart, appeared there, and Madame d'Anglures, with Josephine and Henri Desguey, now betrothed lovers, came over to join the Christmas party, while the Marquis de Cressy, with his gay little Eulalie, promised to take a peep at them in the spring.

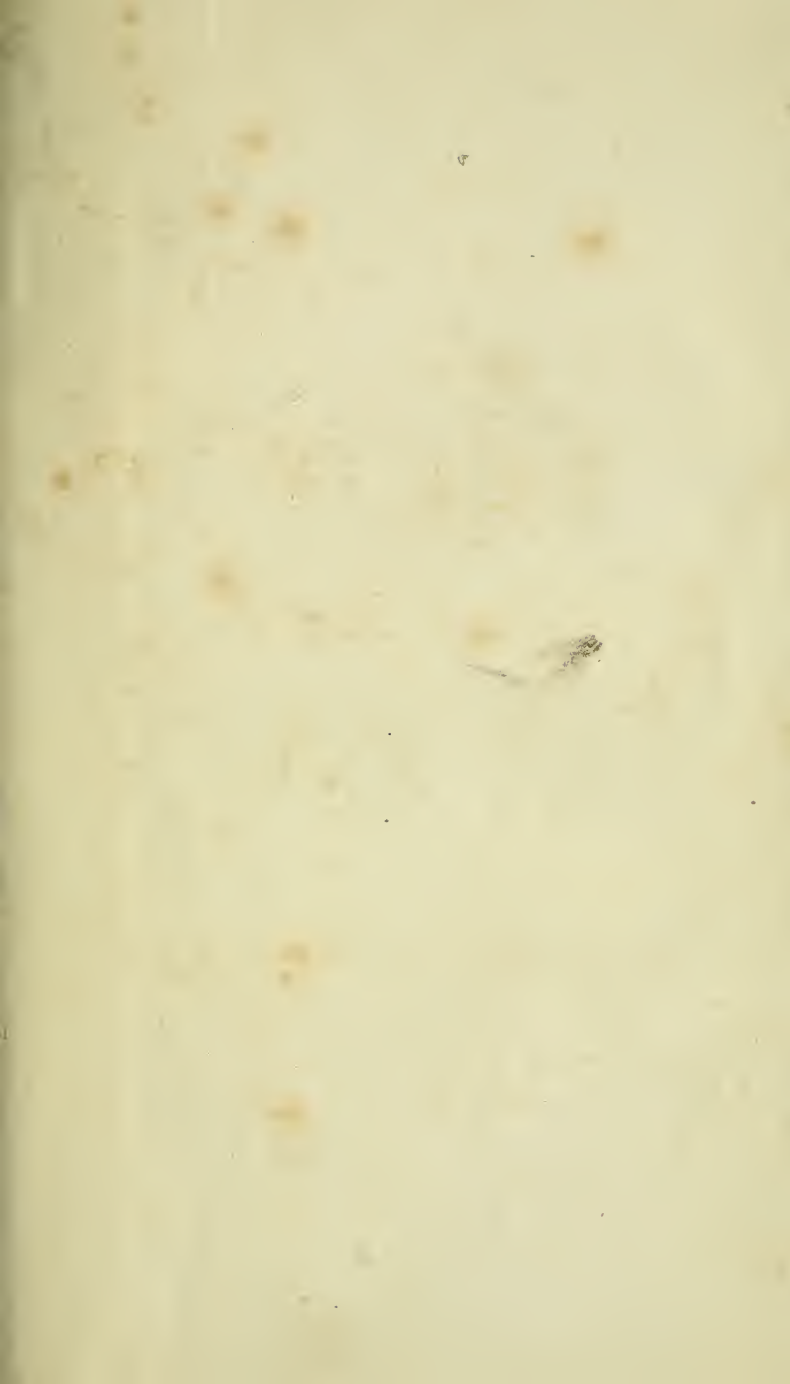
As to Pierre Delamare, we have been able to find out very little concerning him after he took priest's orders. That he never rose to be a dignitary in the church, is evident, his name not being found in any record of those days, and as his godfather, the archbishop, died soon after his entrance into the church, it is strongly

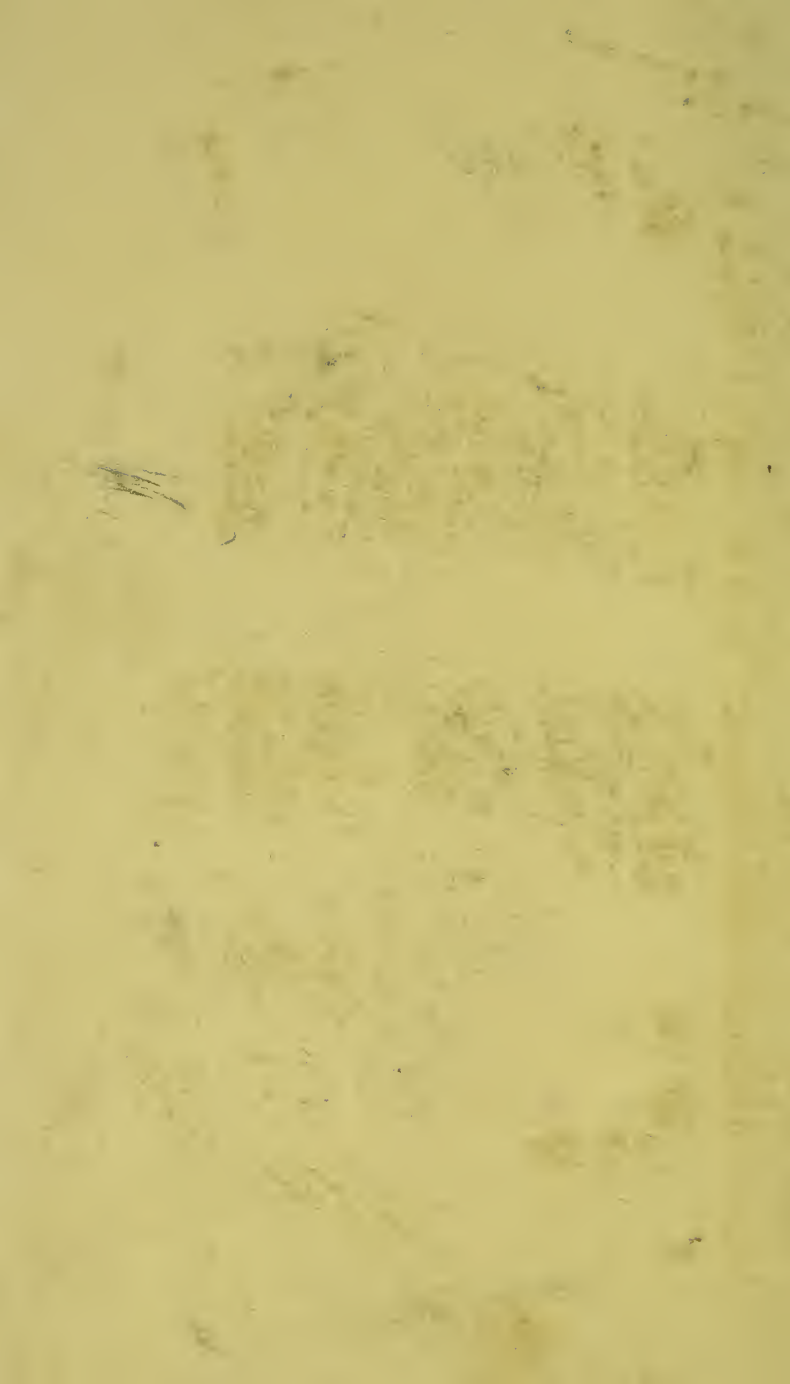
suspected that he fell into the obscurity he deserved.

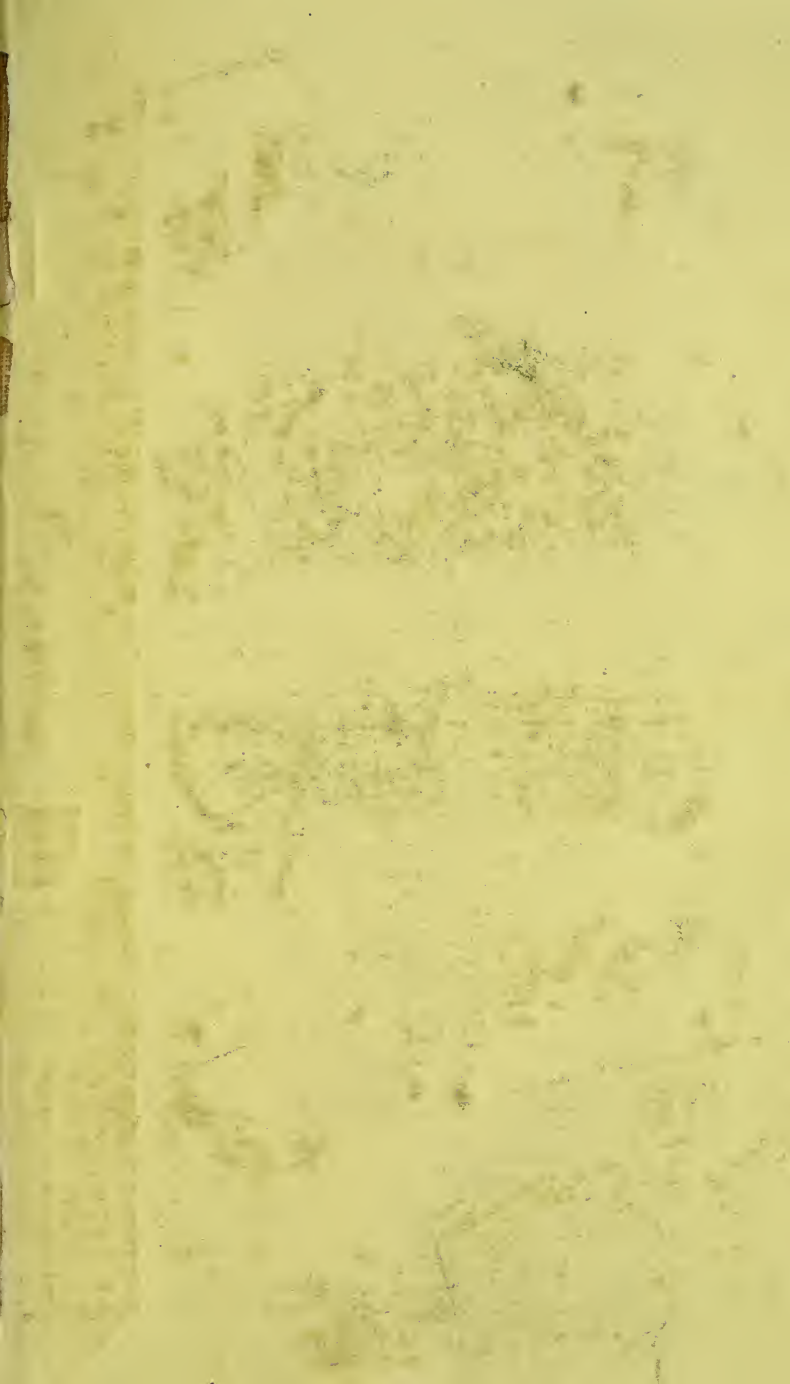
Tradition is not so silent about the Marchioness de Varville, who, we are told, lived to be old, ugly, and neglected; and this, after all, is, perhaps, the greatest punishment that can befall a woman of her disposition.

THE END.









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